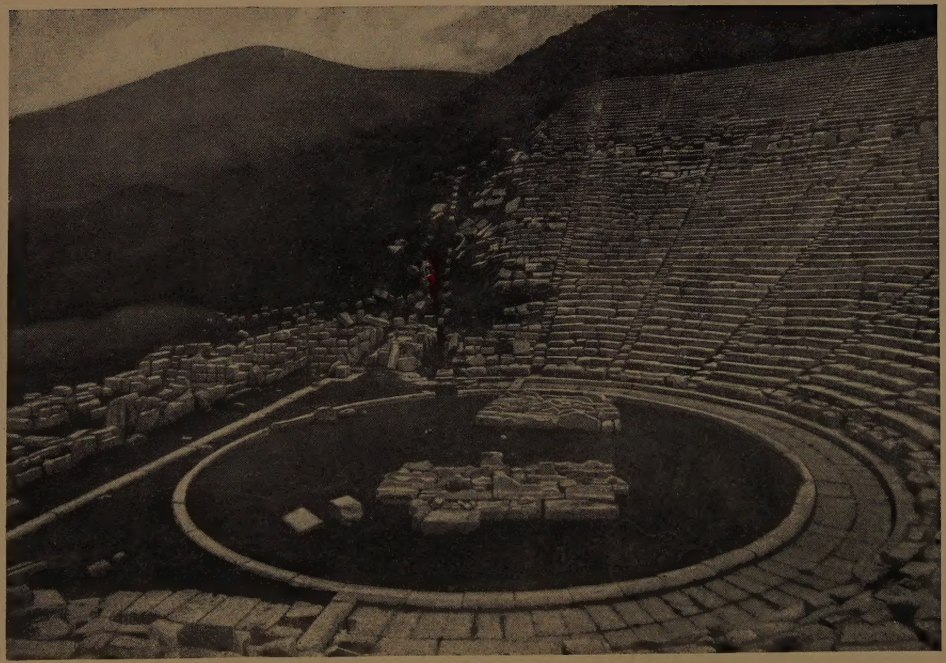
IDEALS IN GREEK LITERATURE

WILLIAM CRANSTON LAWTON

CHAUTAUQUA
HOME READING SERIES



THEATER AT EPIDAUROS

Distinguished Among the Greeks for Architectural Harmony and Beauty

Ideals in Greek Literature

BY

WILLIAM CRANSTON LAWTON

OF ADELPHI COLLEGE

AUTHOR OF "INTRODUCTION TO GREEK LITERATURE," "ART AND HUMANITY IN HOMER," ETC.

WITHDRAWN

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
	PREFACE	v
	GENERAL BIBLIOGRAPHY	vii
I.	THE OLDER ILIAD: Comradeship in Strife. Achilles and Patroclus. Sarpedon and Glaucus.	1
II.	LATER ADDITIONS TO THE ILIAD: Family Ties. Hector and Andromache. Priam's Grief for Hector.	17
III.	THE ODYSSEY: Home Love. The Return of Odysseus.	32
IV.	HESIOD'S WORKS AND DAYS: Rustic Thrift.	43
V.	LYRIC POETRY:	51
VI.	ÆSCHYLUS AND THE PROMETHEUS: The Heroism of Endurance.	64
VII.	SOPHOCLES AND THE ANTIGONE: Human Law vs. Divine Ordinance.	102
VIII.	EURIPIDES AND THE ALCESTIS: The Glory of Self-Sacrifice.	139
IX.	ARISTOPHANES' CLOUDS: Ridicule as a Moral Weapon.	173
X.	HERODOTUS: The Battle of Salamis.	203
XI.	THUCYDIDES: The Periclean Funeral Oration.	212

CHAPTER PAGE

XII. The Platonic Socrates:
An Apostle of Righteousness. - - - 221

XIII. Demosthenes on the Crown:
An Ideal of Civic Patriotism. - - - 237

XIV. Sicilian Idylls of Theocritus:
The Poetry of Rustic Life. - - - 246

PREFACE

The present volume undertakes to set directly before the student a series of masterpieces which, ever since their creation, have appealed powerfully to lovers of art and truth. When interest in the best works has been aroused, more detailed study becomes a delight. The materials for such study are indicated quite copiously in the notes at the close of each chapter. Meantime, only what has seemed absolutely necessary in the way of general introduction and elucidation has been offered.

In the classical Greek literature, from the "Iliad" to Moschos's lament for Bion, there is felt a certain unity, for in it is reflected, and idealized, the life of one remarkable people. The Greeks had already taken possession of the shores and islands of the Ægean sea at least three thousand years ago. This excitable, jealous, often cruel, but wonderfully gifted type of man appears from the first fully conscious of his diversity from the surrounding "barbarians." The Hellenes were the most artistic of races: most sensitive to harmony, whether in form, color, music, or action. In art-forms they are the teachers of all later men. The Hebrew has led the world toward spiritual abstractions, the Roman pointed the way to a stable civic organism, but in joyous unfolding of the individual sensuous life no man, not even the Florentine, has ever rivalled the fifth century Athenian, the typical Greek.

It is not easy for us to understand him. Our sense of artistic beauty is but half-developed. Our sturdy, reticent,

practical individualism is remote from his. Yet from him can best be learned a delightful lesson, the fullest enjoyment of all beauty in nature or art. The ethical quality, the moral purpose, is not always prominent. That it is usually present, nevertheless, our selections should demonstrate.

GENERAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

The largest survey of Greek literature in English is the work, in four volumes, of the learned, genial, erratic, pugnacious Professor Mahaffy; the smallest, but one of the very best accounts is the primer of Professor Jebb. Neither contains much citation from the Greek authors. The series of small volumes published, in America, by Lippincott, called "Ancient Classics for English Readers," treats each great writer singly and quite fully, with large quotations. J. A. Symonds' "Greek Poets" is too verbose, but very suggestive, and contains much fine translation. The views of the present author are most fully set forth in his "Introduction to Classical Greek Literature," Scribners, 1903.

For thorough further study two of the first requisites are a good classical atlas like Kiepert's, and a political history of Greece, preferably the monumental work of Grote, or the more recent and somewhat less voluminous Holm, in German original or English translation. For mythology an adequate book in English like Decharme's "Mythologie de la Grèce Antique" is sadly needed. Of the many school manuals based on Bulfinch's antiquated "Age of Fable" the best are Gayley's "Classical Myths in English Literature" and Guerber's "Myths of Greece and Rome." The best general reference book is probably Harper's "Classical Dictionary of Literature and Antiquities." All these should be contained in any respectable city library. The solitary reader will usually

find them too expensive. He should at least possess one small volume of political Greek history, such as the readable manuals of Bury, Oman, and Botsford, the last of which also contains sufficiently good maps. The history of the plastic arts illuminates the story of literature, and happily Professor Tarbell's excellent little book, "A History of Greek Art," will be in the hands of all Chautauqua students.

Most essential, however, is the perusal of complete masterpieces in literary English versions. These will be quite copiously catalogued under the several authors.

CHAPTER I

THE OLDER ILIAD

Comradeship in Strife. Achilles and Patroclus. Sarpedon and Glaucus.

The "Iliad," a splendid epic poem in 15,000 hexameter verses, had apparently approached essentially its present form as early as the ninth century B.C., and exerted a dominant influence on all later writers. The poet claims to be inspired by the Muses, and to sing of a remote foretime quite unlike his own day. The greatest gods mingle freely in mortal strife, and even their councils, on the summit of snow-capt Mount Olympus, are fully reported. The human heroes are often half divine in parentage.

Nearly or quite the whole Greek race appears in the poem as united under the empire of the selfish and vacillating Agamemnon. The jealous princes, the haughty nobility, the abject folk, all obey him. In the struggle to restore his sister-in-law, Helen, to her rightful husband Menelaus, all the clans have for the last ten years been encamped in Asia, on the Trojan plain, quite ignorant of whatever has befallen in their homes. The utter destruction of Troy, involved in the sin of the wilful young Trojan prince, Paris, who has run away with Helen, is often foreshadowed.

The "Iliad" does not directly describe the beginning nor the end of the long contest, but only a brief episode

in the tenth year of the war. The hero is a demi-god, Achilles. His mother, the sea-nymph Thetis, most lovely of goddesses, though beloved by Zeus and other high gods, was wedded to a mortal because her son was fated to be mightier than his sire. During the war he has been the leader in a score of forays, supporting and enriching the whole camp by his booty. Yet Agamemnon wrests from Achilles by violence his chief prize, the lovely princess Briseis, who was to have become her captor's lawful wife and queen.

Achilles fiercely refuses to fight longer for a chieftain who commits the very sin he had led forth all Greece to avenge. While the Greek champion sulks in his cabin, prince Hector leads the Trojans to victory, sets fire to the fleet on the shore, and threatens the Greeks with utter destruction.

But Achilles has one gentler side. He cannot wholly resist the pleadings of his best-beloved comrade, the tender-hearted Patroclus. Reluctantly he lends his armor to his friend, bidding him not to pursue the Trojans into the open plain. Patroclus rashly disobeys, and is eventually slain by Hector. Then Achilles, as Dante says,

"fought, at the last, for love,"

and ended his feud with Agamemnon that he might avenge his friend by slaying the thrice-hated Hector.

With Hector's funeral, the poem, even in its present form, abruptly ends;

"Thus was a tomb made ready for Hector the tamer of horses."

But, as Mr. Grote has remarked, it is not now a mere Achilleid, as we should expect from the opening line:

"Sing, oh goddess, the wrath of Achilles, offspring of Peleus."

Rather, by insertion of manifold episodes, it has grown to be an "Iliad" indeed: a picture of the whole war about Ilios or Troy. Most scholars agree that these insertions have been made by various hands, probably through many decades. But the character and fate of Patroclus is essential to the main action. His death cuts the knot, and must have been part of the original scheme.

Whether the events of the "Iliad" had any realistic basis can never be known. The excavations of Dr. Schliemann and others have revealed ruins of a strong hill-fort in the Trojan plain, of massive palaces or castles at Mycenæ, Agamemnon's capital, and at other points in Greece. But no inscriptions or datable records are found. The folk that built these fortresses were as little known to Pericles' generation as to us. It may well be that they were not Greeks at all. We naturally associate these builders of real fortresses with the Homeric myth, but a myth it remains. Superhuman forces, poetic imagination, are its very warp and woof. It must be studied as an ideal work of art.

Yet the "Iliad" is intensely human. Its men and women are more real, and also more lovable, than its divinities. To Greek minds, friendship between men was a loftier impulse to noble deeds than love between man and woman. Of that familiar tie, Achilles and Patroclus formed the most inspiring example. In their companionship, not in the love of Achilles for Briseis, much less the wedded happiness of Hector and Andromache, the Greek poet, and his hearers, saw the chief motive of the epic. We may profitably, then, turn aside from the gory and

sometimes wearisome battle-scenes, and endeavor to make the more intimate acquaintance of the gentlest and most lovable among Homer's heroes.

Patroclus is forced to sit idle through the earlier part of the action, and is dead long before the end. Yet we get more than one illuminating glimpse of his kindly nature. The first is when Achilles, standing in unwelcome inaction at his cabin door beside the Hellespont, thinks he sees his friend, the physician Machaon, carried off the field wounded by the venerable Nestor, and sends Patroclus to make inquiry. So

> Before the gate divine Patroclus stood:
> The old man saw, and from his seat arose,
> And took him by the hand, and led him in,
> And bade him sit; but he, refusing, said:
> "No seat for me, thou venerable sire!
> I must not stay, for he both awe and fear
> Commands, who hither sent me to enquire
> What wounded man thou hast. I need not ask,
> I know Machaon well, his people's guard.
> My errand done, I must my message bear
> Back to Achilles, and thou know'st thyself,
> Thou venerable sire, how stern his mood:
> Nay sometimes blames he where no blame is due."
> To whom Gerenian Nestor thus replied:
> "Whence comes Achilles' pity for the Greeks
> By Trojan weapons wounded? Knows he not
> What depth of suff'ring through the camp prevails?
> How in the ships, by arrow or by spear
> Sore wounded, all our best and bravest lie?
> The valiant son of Tydeus, Diomed,
> Pierced by a shaft; Ulysses by a spear,
> And Agamemnon's self; Eurypylus
> By a sharp arrow through the thigh transfixed;
> And here another, whom I now but bring,

Shot by a bow, from off the battlefield.
Achilles, valiant as he is, the while
For Grecian woes nor care nor pity feels.
Waits he, until our ships beside the sea,
In our despite, are burnt by hostile fires,
And we be singly slain?''

Nestor reminds Patroclus of the injunctions given him when he and Achilles left their home.

''Menœtius, Actor's son,
To thee this counsel gave: 'My son,' he said,
'Achilles is by birth above thee far,
Thou art in years the elder; he in strength
Surpasses thee; do thou with prudent words
And timely speech address him, and advise
And guide him; he will, to his good, obey.'
''Such were the old man's words; but thou hast let
His counsel slip thy mem'ry; yet ev'n now
Speak to Achilles thus, and stir his soul,
If haply he will hear thee; and who knows
But by the grace of Heav'n thou mayst prevail?
For great is oft a friend's persuasive power.
But if the fear of evil prophesied,
Or message by his Goddess-mother brought
From Jove, restrain him, let him send thee forth
With all his force of warlike Myrmidons,[1]
That thou may'st be the saving force of Greece.
Then let him bid thee to the battle bear
His glitt'ring arms, if so the men of Troy,
Scar'd by his likeness, may forsake the field,
And breathing-time afford the sons of Greece,
Toil-worn; for little pause has yet been theirs.
Fresh and unwearied, ye with ease may drive
To their own city, from our ships and tents,
The Trojans, worn and battle-wearied men.''
Thus he; Patroclus' spirit within him burn'd,
And tow'rd Achilles' tent in haste he sped.

[1] The people and soldiery of Achilles.

Delayed by a task of mercy, binding up the wounds of another Greek chieftain, Patroclus reaches Achilles's cabin again but just before Hector's greatest triumph. The Trojan prince has actually reached the Greek ships, and set one of them on fire.

Thus round the well-mann'd ship they wag'd the war:
Meanwhile by Peleus' son Patroclus stood,
Weeping hot tears; as some dark-water'd fount
Pours o'er a craggy rock its gloomy stream;
Achilles, swift of foot, with pity saw,
And to his friend these wingèd words address'd:
"Why weeps Patroclus, like an infant girl,
That prays her mother, by whose side she runs,
To take her up, and, clinging to her gown,
Impedes her way, and still with tearful eyes
Looks in her face, until she take her up?
Ev'n as that girl, Patroclus, such art thou,
Shedding soft tears. Hast thou some tidings brought
Touching the general weal, or me alone?
Or have some evil news from Phthia come,
Known but to thee? Menœtius, Actor's son,
Yet surely lives, and 'mid his Myrmidons
Lives aged Peleus, son of Æacus:
Their deaths indeed might well demand our tears:
Or weep'st thou for the Greeks, who round their ships
By death their former insolence repay?
Speak out, that I may know the cause of grief."
To whom, with bitter groans, Patroclus thus:
"O son of Peleus, noblest of the Greeks,
Achilles, be not wroth! such weight of woe
The Grecian camp oppresses; in their ships
They who were late their bravest and their best,
Sore wounded all by spear or arrow lie;
For these, the large resources of their art
The leeches ply, and on their wounds attend;
While thou, Achilles, still remain'st unmov'd.

Oh, be it never mine to nurse such hate
As thou retain'st, inflexibly severe!
Who e'er may hope in future days by thee
To profit, if thou now forbear to save
The Greeks from shame and loss? Unfeeling man!
Sure Peleus, horseman brave, was ne'er thy sire,
Nor Thetis bore thee; from the cold grey sea
And craggy rocks thou hadst thy birth, so hard
And stubborn is thy soul. But if the fear
Of evil prophesied thyself restrain,
Or message by the Goddess-mother brought
From Jove, yet send me forth with all thy force
Of Myrmidons, to be the saving light
Of Greece, and let me to the battle bear
Thy glitt'ring arms, if so the men of Troy,
Scar'd by thy likeness, may forsake the field,
And breathing-time afford the sons of Greece,
Toil-worn," . . . .

* * * * * *

Thus pray'd he, all unwisely, for the pray'r
He utter'd to himself was fraught with death.
To whom much griev'd, Achilles swift of foot:
"Heav'n-born Patroclus, oh, what words are these!
Prophetic warnings move me not, though known;
Nor message hath my mother brought from Jove;
But it afflicts my soul, when one I see
That basely robs his equal of his prize,
His lawful prize, by highest valour won;
Such grief is mine, such wrong have I sustain'd.
Her, whom the sons of Greece on me bestow'd
Prize of my spear, the well-walled city [1] storm'd,
The mighty Agamemnon, Atreus' son,
Hath borne by force away, as from the hands
Of some dishonour'd, houseless vagabond.
But let the past be past; I never meant
My wrath should have no end; yet had not thought

[1] Not, of course, Troy itself, but a lesser town. Achilles had made twenty-three such successful forays, by land or sea.

My anger to abate, till my own ships
Should hear the war-cry, and the battle bear.
But go, and in my well-known armor clad,
Lead forth the valiant Myrmidons to war,
Since the dark crowd of Trojans circles round
The ships in force; and on the shingly beach,
Pent up in narrow limits, lie the Greeks;
And all the city hath pour'd its numbers forth
In hope undoubting; for they see no more
My helm among them flashing; else in flight
Their dead would choke the streams, if but to me
Great Agamemnon bore a kindly mind:
But round the camp the battle now is wag'd
Nathless[1] do thou, Patroclus, in defence
Fall boldly on, lest they with blazing fire
Our ships destroy, and hinder our retreat.
But hear, and ponder well the end of all
I have to say, and so for me obtain
Honour and glory in the eyes of Greece;
And that the beauteous maiden to my arms
They may restore, with costly gifts to boot.
The ships relieved, return forthwith; and though
The Thund'rer, Juno's lord, should crown thine arms
With triumph, be not rash, apart from me,
To combat with the warlike sons of Troy;
(So should my name in less repute be held;)
Nor, in the keen excitement of the flight,
And slaughter of the Trojans, lead thy troops
On tow'rd the city, lest thou find thyself
By some one of th' immortal gods oppos'd."

We need not think Achilles really so jealous of his friend's fame. Like Hamlet in his dying words to Horatio, he may be merely choosing the strongest appeal to a generous nature.

Patroclus, after many gallant exploits, is disarmed by

[1] Nevertheless.

the god Phœbus Apollo, wounded from behind by a cowardly foeman, and finally falls helpless before Hector's spear. His last word is the name of his friend.

"Hector, thou boastest loudly now, that Jove,
With Phœbus join'd, hath thee with vict'ry crown'd:
They wrought my death who stripped me of my arms.
Had I to deal with twenty such as thee,
They all should perish, vanquish'd by my spear:
Me fate hath slain, and Phœbus, and of men,
Euphorbus; thou wast but the third to strike.
This too I say, and bear it in thy mind;
Not long shalt thou survive me; death e'en now
And final doom hangs o'er thee, by the hand
Of great Achilles, Peleus' matchless son."

When the evil news reaches Achilles, his lovely mother comes, with all her sister-nymphs, from the sea-caves to console him.

There as he groan'd aloud, beside him stood
His Goddess-mother; she, with bitter cry,
Clasp'd in her hands his head, and sorrowing spoke:
"Why weeps my son? and what his cause of grief?
Speak out, and naught conceal; for all thy pray'r,
Which with uplifted hands thou mad'st to Jove,
He hath fulfilled; that, flying to their ships,
The routed sons of Greece should feel how much
They need thine aid, and deep disgrace endure."
To whom Achilles, deeply groaning, thus:
"Mother, all this indeed hath Jove fulfilled;
Yet what avails it, since my dearest friend
Is slain, Patroclus? whom I honoured most
Of all my comrades, lov'd him as my soul.
Him have I lost; and Hector from his corpse
Hath stripp'd those arms, those weighty, beauteous arms,
A marvel to behold, which from the Gods
Peleus received, a glorious gift, that day

When they consigned thee to a mortal's bed.
How better were it, if thy lot had been
Still 'mid the ocean deities to dwell,
And Peleus had espoused a mortal bride!
For now is bitter grief for thee in store,
Mourning thy son; whom to his home return'd
Thou never more shalt see; nor would I wish
To live, and move among my fellow-men,
Unless that Hector, vanquish'd by my spear,
May lose his forfeit life, and pay the price
Of foul dishonour to Patroclus done."
To whom, her tears o'erflowing, Thetis thus:
"E'en as thou say'st, my son, thy term is short;
Nor long shall Hector's fate precede thine own."
Achilles, answ'ring, spoke in passionate grief:
"Would I might die this hour, who fail'd to save
My comrade slain! far from his native land
He died, sore needing my protecting arm."

When Briseis is sent back by Agamemnon to her imperious lover, we get a new and unexpected sidelight on Patroclus's character.

Briseis, fair as golden Venus, saw
Patroclus lying, pierc'd with mortal wounds,
Within the tent; and with a bitter cry,
She flung her down upon the corpse, and tore
Her breast, her delicate neck, and beauteous cheeks;
And, weeping, thus the lovely woman wail'd:
"Patroclus, dearly loved of this sad heart!
When last I left this tent, I left thee full
Of healthy life; returning now, I find
Only thy lifeless corpse, thou prince of men!
So sorrow still, on sorrow heap'd, I bear.
The husband of my youth, to whom my sire
And honour'd mother gave me, I beheld
Slain with the sword before the city walls:
Three brothers, whom with me one mother bore,

My dearly lov'd ones, all were doomed to death:
Nor wouldst thou, when Achilles swift of foot
My husband slew, and Mynes' town
In ruin laid, allow my tears to flow;
But thou wouldst make me (such was still thy speech)
The wedded wife of Peleus' godlike son:
Thou wouldst to Phthia bear me in thy ship,
And there, thyself, amid the Myrmidons,
Wouldst give my marriage feast. Then, unconsol'd,
I weep thy death, my ever-gentle friend!"

The purely martial scenes of the poem culminate in the duel between the two greatest champions, which is very fully described. Here again, as in Patroclus' undoing, divine trickery accomplishes more than human prowess. Pallas Athene's resistless aid makes the Greek the victor.

Even in the act of slaying Hector, Achilles insists that he is wreaking vengeance for his friend's sake.

"Hector, Patroclus stripping of his arms,
Thy hope was that thyself wast safe; and I,
Not present, brought no terror to thy soul:
Fool! in the hollow ships I yet remain'd,
I, his avenger, mightier far than he;
I, who am now thy conqu'ror. By the dogs
And vultures shall thy corpse be foully torn,
While him the Greeks with fun'ral rites shall grace."

In dreams Achilles and his dead friend are reunited. In the long agony of his grief

. . . . On the many-dashing ocean's shore
Pelides lay, amid his Myrmidons,
With bitter groans. In a clear space he lay,
Where broke the waves, continuous, on the beach.
There, circumfus'd about him, gentle sleep,

Lulling the sorrows of his heart to rest,
O'er came his senses; for the hot pursuit
Of Hector round the breezy heights of Troy
His active limbs had wearied.
As he slept,
Sudden appear'd Patroclus' mournful shade,
His very self; his height and beauteous eyes,
And voice; the very garb he wont to wear.
Above his head it stood, and thus it spoke:
"Sleep'st thou, Achilles, mindless of thy friend,
Neglecting, not the living, but the dead?
Hasten my fun'ral rites, that I may pass
Through Hades' gloomy gates. Ere these be done,
The spirits and spectres of departed men
Drive me far from them, nor allow to cross
Th' abhorrèd river; but forlorn and sad
I wander through the widespread realms of night.
And give me now thy hand, whereon to weep;
For never more, when laid upon the pyre,
Shall I return from Hades; never more,
Apart from all our comrades, shall we two,
As friends, sweet counsel take; for me, stern Death,
The common lot of men, has op'd his mouth;
Thou too, Achilles, rival of the Gods,
Art destin'd here beneath the walls of Troy
To meet thy doom; yet one thing must I add,
And make, if thou wilt grant it, one request.
Let not my bones be laid apart from thine,
Achilles, but together, as our youth
Was spent together in thy father's house,
Since first my sire Menœtius me a boy
From Opus brought, a luckless homicide,
Who of Amphidamas, by evil chance,
Had slain the son, disputing o'er the dice:
Me noble Peleus in his house receiv'd,
And kindly nurs'd, and thine attendant made.
So in one urn be now our bones enclos'd,
The golden vase, thy Goddess-mother's gift."

Whom answer'd thus Achilles, swift of foot:
"Why art thou here, lov'd being? Why on me
These sev'ral charges lay? Whate'er thou bidd'st
Will I perform, and all thy mind fulfill;
But draw thou near, and in one short embrace,
Let us, while yet we may, our grief indulge."
Thus as he spoke, he spread his longing arms,
But nought he clasped, and with a wailing cry,
Vanish'd, like smoke, the spirit beneath the earth.
Up sprang Achilles, all amaz'd, and smote
His hands together, and lamenting cried:
"O Heav'n, there are then, in the realms below,
Spirits and spectres, unsubstantial all;
For all night long Patroclus' shade hath stood,
Weeping and wailing, at my side, and told
His bidding; th' image of himself it seem'd."

With no companion save the roaring wind gods Achilles watches all night beside the pyre.

. . . . They all night long
With current brisk together fann'd the fire.
All night Achilles with a double cup
Drew from a golden bowl the ruddy wine,
Wherewith, outpour'd, he moisten'd all the earth,
Still calling on his lost Patroclus' shade.
As mourns a father o'er a youthful son,
Whose early death has wrung his parents' hearts;
So mourned Achilles o'er his friend's remains,
Prostrate beside the pyre, and groan'd aloud.
But when the star of Lucifer appear'd,
The harbinger of light, whom following close
Spreads o'er the sea the saffron-robèd morn,
Then pal'd the smould'ring fire, and sank the flame;
And o'er the Thracian sea, that groan'd and heav'd
Beneath their passage, home the Winds return'd;
And weary, from the pyre a space withdrawn,
Achilles lay, o'ercome by gentle sleep.

The memorial mound is to be built for both friends. Achilles gives the command:

"These ashes in a golden urn shall lie
Till I myself shall in the tomb be laid;
And o'er them build a mound, not over large,
But of proportions meet; in days to come,
Ye Greeks, who after me shall here remain,
Complete the work, and build it broad and high."

It is fitting to set beside this pair of friends the noble kinsmen Glaucus and Sarpedon, who came from far off Lycia to aid King Priam, the unhappy father of Paris and of Hector. The passage here offered is generally regarded as peculiarly suited to the genius of Pope, whose sonorous version may be cited. Sarpedon, who is a son of Zeus, the supreme god, by a mortal mother, addresses his merely human cousin as they prepare to enter the fray together.

"Why boast we, Glaucus, our extended reign,
Where Xanthus' streams enrich the Lycian plain,
Our numerous herds that range the fruitful field,
And hills where vines their purple harvest yield,
Our foaming bowls with purer nectar crown'd,
Our hearts entranced with music's sprightly sound?
Why on these shores are we with joy survey'd,
Admired as heroes and as gods obey'd,
Unless great acts superior merit prove,
And vindicate the bounteous powers above?
'Tis ours the dignity they give to grace;
The first in valor as the first in place;
That, when with wandering eyes our martial bands
Behold our deeds transcending our commands,
'Such', they may cry, 'deserve the sovereign state,
Whom those that envy dare not imitate!'
Could all our care elude the gloomy grave,
Which claims no less the fearful and the brave,

For lust of fame I should not vainly dare
In fighting fields, nor urge thy soul to war.
But since, alas! ignoble age must come,
Disease, and death's inexorable doom,
The life, which others pay, let us bestow,
And give to fame what we to honor owe;
Brave though we fall, and honor'd if we live,
Or let us glory gain or glory give!"

Outward conditions of life change ceaselessly; but such comradeship as this, such a noble sense of the duty that is imposed by lofty rank, even the rather grim fatalism of the latter lines, will always make strong appeal to men, and above all to the gallant patriotic soldier.

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The famous Elizabethan translation of Homer by John Chapman, despite Keats' glorification of it in his sonnet: "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer," is very hard reading, full of quaint "conceits," and often most un-Homeric. Pope's resonance, clear syntax, and rapid movement, are all most fitting, but he also introduces in numberless details the manners and tastes of his own day, and he probably could not read the Greek at all, depending chiefly on incompetent French translators. It is the largest example in English of clear forceful writing by a perfect master of the heroic couplet, but as the great scholar Bentley said to Pope, "You mustn't call it Homer."

The most popular recent rhythmical versions are doubtless Lord Derby's and William Cullen Bryant's, both in blank verse, or ten-syllable unrhymed lines. The former has been freely quoted in this chapter, the latter in the "Odyssey." Both translators use the Roman names for gods instead of the Greek, calling the king of heaven and his wife Jupiter, or Jove, and Juno, not Zeus and Hera, the war god Mars, not Ares, the goddess of love Venus instead of Aphrodite. Even the patroness of Odysseus is oftener named Minerva than Pallas Athenè. A more serious fault

is the slow effect inherent in the rhythm. A certain pedantic stiffness in the British, a refined gentleness in the American translater might be mentioned. Both are good and essentially faithful versions, Bryant's the more enjoyable. Other spirited verse-translations have been published by Way, Blackie, Worsley and Conington, and many others.

The exact statements of Homer are well rendered in somewhat archaic English prose, by the three English scholars Lang, Leaf, and Myers, collaborating on the Macmillan translation. For the discoveries by excavation at Troy, Mycenæ, etc., the English reader should refer to Tsountas' and Manatt's "Mycenean Age," rather than to Dr. Schliemann's own stately volumes.

The unity of authorship in the "Iliad" is best defended by Andrew Lang, in "Homer and the Epic." He does not fully meet the assaults of his friend Leaf, who in his "Companion to the Iliad" assigns the parts of the poem in detail to several successive composers and interpolators.

CHAPTER II

LATER ADDITIONS TO THE ILIAD

Family Ties. Hector and Andromache. Priam's Grief for Hector.

In the "Iliad" the Greeks come to Asia Minor as to an alien land. The Asiatic peoples are arrayed as allies or vassals on Priam's side. But still, most of the seven or more towns that claimed each to be the place of Homer's birth, Smyrna, Chios, etc., are old *Greek* cities on the *Eastern* side of the Ægean. These cities may really all have been early colonies from Greece proper. If, as is widely believed, these Eastward pilgrims brought the older portions of the "Iliad" with them, it is natural that some of the latest additions to the poem, as we now read it, should have been made in the new home, and should delineate with fullest sympathy the Asiatic heroes, even though they had fought on the wrong side in the mythic war about Troy; even though, like Evangeline and Hiawatha, they were of races alien and hostile to their poet's own people. These portions seem to show more refinement, and gentler feeling, than the older parts of the epic. Among them is the passage last cited,—with others in which both Glaucus and Sarpedon are given marked honor,—and, especially, the two great scenes which are perhaps better known than any others: the parting of Hector and his wife Andromache before his last great exploits, and the final appearance of old king

Priam in the cabin of his deadliest foe Achilles, whither he has gone by night to beg the privilege of ransoming the body of his bravest son.

For the former extract an attempt may be made to imitate, in our own harsher, more consonantal speech, the hexameter rhythm of the Greek poem.

PARTING OF HECTOR AND ANDROMACHE

So thro' the city he passed, and came to the Scæan gateway,
Where he intended forth to the plain and the battle to sally.
There did his bounteous wife, Andromache, running to meet him
Come,—Andromache, child of Eëtion, fearless in spirit.
He, Eëtion, dwelt at the foot of deep-wooded Plakos;
Ruling Cilician folk in Thebè under the mountain.
She was his daughter, and wife unto brazen-helmeted[1] Hector.
So she came and met him, and with her followed the servant,
Clasping the innocent boy to her bosom—yet but an infant,
Hector's well-loved child, and brightly he shone as a star shines.
Hector Scamandrius called him, the others Astyanax named him,
Prince of the city—for Hector alone was Ilios' bulwark.

Hector is too modest to call his child Lord of the Town, and names him instead Child of the River, Scamander, the chief stream of the Trojan plain. Some commentators have cut out these lines as *unpoetical*.

[1] These "permanent" epithets often became almost like names. Often, too, they are amusingly unsuited to the particular incident being described. We saw "swift-footed" Achilles standing idle. So Helen is "trailing-robed" even when hurrying thro' the dusty streets. Juno is "golden-throned," when she goes sleepy to bed!

Smiling the father stood, as he looked at his son, and in silence
Close to his side, with a tear in her eye, Andromache pressing
Clung to her husband's hand, and thus she spoke and addressed him:
"Ah me, surely your prowess will slay you! Nor will you have pity,
Not for your helpless child, nor yet for myself the ill-fated.
Soon I of you shall be robbed. Ere long the Achæans will slay you,
All of them rushing upon you! And truly, for me it were better,
When I of you am bereft, to go down to the grave. Nor hereafter
May consolation be mine, when once your doom is accomplished,
Only laments! No father have I, nor reverend mother.
Well do you know how Achilles the godlike murdered my father,
When he had sacked our city, that well-built town of Cilicians,
Thebè with lofty gates; and Eëtion also he murdered,
Though he despoiled him not, since that he dreaded in spirit.
There did the victor burn his body, in beautiful armor.
He, too, heaped up a mound, and the elms are growing about it
Set by the Oreads, sprung from Zeus, who is lord of the ægis.
Seven my brethren were, who together abode in the palace.
All on a single day passed down to the dwelling of Hades,
Each of them slain by the sword of the fleet-footed, godlike Achilles,—
They, and the white-fleeced sheep, and the herds of the slow-paced oxen.
Lastly, my mother, who ruled as a queen under deep-wooded Plakos:—

Though he had led her hither, along with the rest of the booty,
Yet he released her again, and accepted a glorious ransom.
Then, in the hall of her father, the huntress Artemis slew her.[1]
Hector, so you are to me both father and reverend mother;
You are my brother as well, and you are my glorious husband.
Pray have pity upon me, and tarry you here on the rampart,
Lest you may leave as an orphan your boy, and your wife as a widow.
Order your people to stand by the fig-tree, since upon that side
Easier gained is the wall, and exposed to assault is the city."

Then unto her made answer the great bright-helmeted Hector:

"Surely for all these things, my wife, am I troubled, but greatly
Shamed were I before Trojans, and long-robed Trojan Matrons,
If like a coward I lingered, afar from the war and the battle.
Nor has my heart so bade me, because I have learned to be always
Valiant and ready to fight in the foremost line of our people,
Striving to win high fame, for myself and for Priam my father.
This, too, well do I know: in my heart and my soul it abideth:
Surely a day shall come when the sacred city shall perish,
Priam himself, and the folk of Priam the valorous spearman.
Yet far less do I grieve for the Trojans' sorrows hereafter,

[1] That is, she died a sudden and painless death.

Even the woes of Hecabè's self, and of Priam the monarch,
Or for the fate of my brethren, though many shall perish undaunted,
Falling prone in the dust by the hands of the merciless foemen,—
Less do I grieve for all this than for you, when a warrior Achæan
Leads you lamenting away, for the day of your freedom is ended.
Then as another's slave at the loom you will labor in Argos,
Or from the spring Hypereia draw water, or else from Messeis,[1]
Oft in reluctance, because compulsion is heavy upon you.
Then, as you weep, perchance 'twill be said by one who shall see you,
'Yon is Hector's wife, who still among knightly Trojans
Bravest proved in the fray, when Troy was with battle encircled.'
So some day will they speak, and again will the pain be repeated,
Since, of so faithful a husband bereft, you will suffer in bondage.
Verily dead may I be, and the earth heaped heavy upon me,
Ere I may hear thy cry, or behold thee dragged by the foemen."
Speaking thus, for his son reached out the illustrious Hector;
Yet he backward recoiled on the breast of the faithful attendant,
Crying aloud in his fright at the sight of his father beloved.
'Twas by the brazen mail and the horsehair plume he was frightened,
Seeing it nodding so fiercely, adown from the crest of his helmet.

[1] The Greek poet, adding the loving touch of local color, forgets that Trojan Hector would never have heard of Pharpar and Abama.

Then out laughed the affectionate father and reverend mother.
Presently now the illustrious Hector lifted his helmet
Off from his head; on the ground he laid it resplendently gleaming.
When he had tossed in his arms his well-loved son, and caressed him,
Then unto Zeus and the other immortals he made his petition:
"Zeus, and ye other immortals, I pray you that even as I am
So this boy may become preëminent over the Trojans,
Mighty and fearless as I, and in Ilios rule by his prowess!
May it hereafter be said, 'He is better by far than his father:'

(It is a verse any man might write in golden letters on the wall of the chamber where lies his first-born son: but we cannot break off here, though the following lines are an unwelcome reminder that Hector, like Achilles, is a "splendid savage" after all!)

—When he returns from the fray, with the bloodstained armour of heroes,
When he has smitten the foe, and gladdened the heart of his mother."
So did he speak; and into the arms of his wife, the beloved,
Laid he the boy, and she in her fragrant bosom received him,
Laughing with tears in her eyes. Her husband was moved as he saw her:
"Dear one, be not for me so exceedingly troubled in spirit.
No one against Fate's will shall send me untimely to Hades.
None among mortal men his destiny ever evadeth,—
Neither the coward nor hero, when once his doom is appointed.

Pray you, go to your home, and there give heed to your
duties;
Tasks of the loom and the spindle, and lay your commands
on the servants,
So they may work your will. Let men take thought for
the combat,
All—I most of them all—whoso are in Ilios native."
So having spoken, illustrious Hector took up the helmet,
Horsehair-crested. The faithful wife had homeward
departed,
Turning ever about, and fast were her tears down drop-
ping.
Presently now to her palace she came, that so fairly was
builded,
Home of Hector, destroyer of heroes: many a servant
Found she within, and among them all she aroused
lamentation.
They in his home over Hector lamented, while yet he was
living,
Since they believed he would come no more from the
battle returning,
Nor would escape from the hands and might of the val-
iant Achæans.

The funeral rites of Patroclus fill Book XXIII. of the "Iliad." Hector's body still lies, insulted and mangled, by his slayer's cabin, while day after day passes. In the next and last book Hermes, the kindly messenger-god, has guided and protected Priam on his way, with costly ransom, to the hostile camp, but leaves him, at the threshold of Achilles, late in the night.

Achilles was just ceasing from his meal,
From drink and food. The table stood by him.
Great Priam entered in unmarked by them
And close beside Achilles took his place,
Clasped with both hands his knees, and kissed

Those awful murderous hands, which had destroyed
His many sons.
As when a mighty curse
Befalleth one who in his fatherland
Hath slain a man, and to another folk
He comes, unto some wealthy man's abode,
And wonder seizes those who look on him,
So did Achilles marvel, as he saw
The godlike Priam: and the others too
In their amazement gazed at one another.
Then Priam prayerfully addressed him thus:
"Remember, O Achilles like the gods,
Thy father, even of such years as I,
Upon the fatal threshold of old age.
Perchance the neighbors vex him round about,
And there is no one to avert from him
Calamity and ruin. But yet he,
Hearing thou art alive, exults in heart,
And all his days is hopeful he shall see
His well-loved son returning home from Troy.
But wholly evil is my fate, who had
The noblest sons in wide Troy-land, and none
Of them, I tell thee, now is left alive.
Fifty I had when the Achæans came:
Nineteen were from one womb born unto me,
The others of the women in my halls.
Of most, impetuous Ares[1] brake the knees.
Him who alone remained, and kept my town
And people, thou the other day hast slain,
While he was fighting for his fatherland:
Hector. For his sake to th' Achæans' ships
I came, to buy him back from thee, and bring
A priceless ranson. But do thou revere
The gods, Achilles, and have pity on me,
Remembering thine own father. Yet am I
More piteous, and have borne what no one else
Of men on earth has done—to lift the hand

[1] The war god, meaning here war itself.

Of him who slew my sons unto my lips."
So spoke he; and he roused indeed in him
Desire of weeping for his father. Then
Grasping him by the hand, he gently pushed
The old man from him; and they both bewailed
Unceasingly: the one remembering
Hector, the slayer of men, the while he lay
Before Achilles' feet; but for his sire
Achilles wept, and for Patroclus too
At times; and in the house their moan went up.
But when divine Achilles had his fill
Of weeping, straightway from the chair he rose,
And lifted by the hand the aged man,
Pitying his hoary head and hoary beard.
Addressing him he uttered wingèd words:
"Ah, wretched one, thou hast indeed endured
Full many woes in heart. How didst thou dare
To come to the Achæans' ships, alone,
Into my presence,—mine, who have despoiled
Thy many noble sons? Thy soul is hard
As iron. But, come, sit upon a chair,
And truly we will let our sorrows lie
Quiet within our hearts, grieved though we be;
For in chill mourning there is no avail,
Since so the gods have spun for wretched men,
To live in sorrow. They are free from care!
For at the door of Zeus two jars are set,
One filled with evil gifts, and one again
With blessings; and to whomsoever Zeus,
Hurler of lightning, intermingling gives,
He chances now on evil, now on good;
While him to whom he gives but ills he makes
A byword! Wretched famine urges him
Over the holy earth. He wanders forth,
Unhonoured of the gods or mortal men.[1]
So the gods gave to Peleus glorious gifts
At birth, for he to all mankind was famed

[1] From the jar of blessings, alone, no man's portion is dipped, it appears.

For bliss and wealth, and ruled the Myrmidons.
A goddess, too, they made his wife, though he
Was mortal. Yet the God sent woe on him;
For in his halls no race of mortal sons
Arose; one all-untimely son had he,
And I protect him not as he grows old:
Since far from home I tarry in the Troad,
Vexing thee, and thy children. And of thee
'Tis said, old sir, that thou wert happy once.
Of all the land which Lesbos, Makar's home,
Doth bound, and Phrygia, and vast Hellespont,
Of all these folk, 'tis said, thou wert supreme,
O agèd man, in tale of wealth and sons.
But since the Heaven-dwellers on thee sent
This sorrow, ever round thy town is strife
And slaying of men.
Endure, and do not grieve
Unceasingly in spirit. Naught by grief
Wilt thou accomplish for thy gallant son;
Thou mayst not raise him up to life again;
Nay, sooner wilt thou suffer other ills."

Then aged godlike Priam answered him:
"Bid me not yet to sit upon a chair,
Thou child of Zeus, while Hector in thy house
Uncared-for lies. But give him up at once,
That I may see him;—and accept the price."

Then swift Achilles with fierce glance replied:
"Chafe me no more, old sir; I do myself
Intend to give thee Hector back. From Zeus
As messenger to me my mother came;
The daughter of the Ancient of the Sea.
And as for thee, O Priam, well I know
In heart, and it escapes me not, some god
Guided thee to the Achæans' speedy ships;
For never mortal man would dare to come,
Though youthful, to our camp, nor could he elude
The guards, nor easily push back the bolts
Upon our gates. So do thou rouse no more,

O agèd man, mine anger in my grief,
Lest I may leave thee not unharmed, even here
Within my cabin, suppliant as thou art,
But may transgress against the will of Zeus."
He spoke; the aged man in fear obeyed.
Pelides like a lion through the house
Rushed to the portal; not alone: with him
Two servants went, heroic Automedon
And Alkimos, whom of his comrades most
Achilles honoured, save Patroclus dead.
They from the yoke released the steeds and mules,
And led the herald of the old King in,
And bade him sit. Then from the shining cart
They took the priceless ransom for the head
Of Hector. But two robes they left, and one
Tunic well-knit, that he might wrap therewith
The dead, and give him to be carried home.
Calling the maids he ordered them to wash
And to anoint him, taking him apart,
That Priam might not look upon his son,
Lest in his sorrowing spirit he might not
Restrain his wrath when he beheld his child;
And so Achilles' heart would be aroused,
And he would slay him, and transgress the will
Of Zeus.[1]

Achilles breathes the prayer:

"Patroclus, be not wroth,
Even in Hades, that I have released
The mighty Hector to his loving father.
For no unworthy ransom did he give,
And with thee I will share it, as is right."

Then, turning to Priam:

"Thy son is freed, old man, as thou hast bid,
And lies upon the bier. At dawn shalt thou
Behold and bear him hence. But now let us

[1] The courteous and chivalric host, fearing that a savage devil may be roused in his own heart, is an early and striking example of conscious-dualism.

Take thought of supper. . . . ."
When they had sated them with food and drink,
Dardanian Priam at Achilles gazed
In wonder, seeing him so tall and fair.
Achilles too admired Dardanian Priam,
Viewing his goodly aspect, giving ear
Unto his words. But when they had looked their fill
At one another, first unto his host
The venerable, godlike Priam spoke:
"Let me at once, O child of Zeus, lie down,
That we of slumber sweet may have our fill,
And rest. Nor yet mine eyes beneath their lids
Have closed, since at thy hands my son gave up
His life, but evermore I groan aloud,
And brood on my innumerable griefs,
Rolling in filth within my courtyard's close.
Now truly have I tasted food, and let
The gleaming wine pass down my throat. Before
I had tasted nothing."

The beds are accordingly spread under the colonnade in the courtyard. Before they part for the night, however, a yet more generous thought occurs to Achilles, and he asks his guest:

"But prithee tell me, and say truthfully,
How many days thou dost intend to pay
Thy rites to mighty Hector, so that I
Myself may wait, and hold my folk aloof."
Then agèd godlike Priam answered him:
"If thou indeed dost wish me to complete
Great Hector's burial, by acting thus,
Achilles, thou wouldst win my gratitude;
Thou knowest we are pent within the town,
The wood is from the mountain far to fetch,
And much in fear the Trojans. We would wail
Nine days for him within our halls, and on
The tenth would bury him, and the folk would feast.

The eleventh we could rear a mound for him,
And on the twelfth will fight, if needs must be."
Then great Achilles, fleet of foot, replied:
"These things shall be for thee as thou dost bid,
And even for so long a time will I
Put off the war as thou commandest me."

This princely promise of Achilles was fulfilled, and with a curt account of Hector's funeral the "Iliad" ends. Of course the final downfall of Troy has been often foreshadowed. The famous wooden horse is first mentioned in the "Odyssey." A number of early epics, now lost, were composed expressly to complete the tale of Troy. Later poets, down to Tennyson and Andrew Lang, have felt the same impulse.

As to the authors of the "Iliad" we know nothing. They may have sung to princes somewhat as the "Iliad" describes. But our first historical view of Hellas, about 600 B.C.—as outlined in Herodotus,—shows us, on both sides the Ægean, trading towns, generally held by free communities. Some such a picture we get, also, in one very late addition to the "Iliad" itself: the account of the decorations on Achilles' shield. The feudal Homeric life had already vanished, if it ever had existed.

Courtly minstrels are described in both the "Iliad" and the "Odyssey." Professional reciters or rhapsodes, not themselves creative poets, existed, singly or in families and guilds, down to a late date. The best description of a Homeric recitation is in Plato's "Ion":

"I often envy the profession of a rhapsode," says Socrates. "He has always to wear fine clothes, and to look as beautiful as possible is a part of his art. . . . . He has a golden crown upon his head. . . . .

"When you produce the greatest effect upon the audience in the recitation of some striking passage, such as the apparition of Odysseus leaping forth on the floor, recognized by the suitors and casting his arrows at his feet, ... are you in your right mind? Are you not carried out of yourself, and does not your soul in an ecstasy seem to be among the persons or places of which you are speaking, whether they are in Ithaca or in Troy or whatever may be the scene of the poem?"

These reciters were clearly almost actors. Whether the player is absorbed in his part, is a question still debated. The answer is both yes and no. The imitative artist has two selves, one critical, one sympathetic.

But the questions, When, By whom, To whom, was the "Iliad" *first* recited, cannot be answered. In its present gigantic form, of course, it could not be recited at one time at all. Between its ideal scenes, and the real life of him who gave the poem essentially its present shape, there may have been as wide a gulf as, for example, between Arthur's Camelot and the age of Alfred Tennyson.

The tradition of a blind Homer, born on the island of Chios, starts with the "Homeric Hymn" to Delian Apollo. That poem is at least a century or two later than the "Iliad," and the passage referred to seems perfectly realistic, but most un-Homeric. This free and happy folk are nowise like the despised commons of the "Iliad." Still less could the poet, who has so carefully effaced himself from every page of the great epic, have made any such self-conscious plea for personal attention as is here set forth:

Greeting unto you all: and be ye of me hereafter
Mindful, when some other of men that on earth have abiding
Hither may come, an outworn stranger, and ask you the question:
"Oh, ye maidens, and who for you is the sweetest of minstrels,
Whoso hither doth come, in whom ye most are delighted?"
Then do ye all, I pray, with one voice answer and tell him,
"Blind is the man, and in Chios abounding in crags is his dwelling.
He it is whose songs shall all be supreme in the future."

So this anonymous hymn only confirms the regretful confession, that, as to the poet or poets of the "Iliad," nothing can ever be known.

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The translations from the "Iliad" in this chapter are taken, by permission of the Macmillan Company, from Lawton's "Art and Humanity in Homer," where other experiments in hexameter may be found. For the "Homeric Hymns" there are complete translations in prose by Edgar and Andrew Lang. On the hymns see also Lawton's "Successors of Homer." The "Ion" should be read entire in Jowett's translation of Plato. See also the note at the end of the previous chapter.

CHAPTER III

THE ODYSSEY

Home Love. The Return of Odysseus.

The "Odyssey" is an epic of 12,000 lines, resembling the "Iliad" in language, metre, and general tone. As a whole it seems more refined and humane, and is probably a few decades younger. It describes the adventures of the crafty Odysseus,—the real victor over Troy, through the stratagem of the wooden horse,—on his ten-year long homeward voyage. Best-known, doubtless, are such scenes as his escape from the gigantic Cyclops' cave, by making the monster drunk and then boring out his single eye. This exploit is, however, a world-wide myth of many peoples, told of each national hero, and probably older far than the whole tale of Troy. The dominant chord of the great song is not love of adventure, but love of home. The very invocation is the best illustration:

"Tell me, O Muse, of that sagacious man
Who, having overthrown the sacred town
Of Ilium, wandered far and visited
The capitals of many nations, learned
The customs of their dwellers, and endured
Great suffering on the deep; his life was oft
In peril, as he labored to bring back
His comrades to their homes. . . . ."
"Now all the rest, as many as escaped
The cruel doom of death, were at their homes,
Safe from the perils of the war and sea,

While him alone, who pined to see his home
And wife again, Calypso, queenly nymph,
Great among goddesses, detained within
Her spacious grot."

Pallas Athenè, his chief patron, begins her plea to the gods for him thus:

"I am grieved
For sage Ulysses, that most wretched man,
So long detained, repining, and afar
From those he loves, upon a distant isle."

. . . . "Impatient to behold the smokes
That rise from hearths in his own land, he pines,
And willingly would die."

The first four books describe chiefly young Telemachus' wanderings in quest of his father.

In Book V. we see the hero himself. Calypso, by command of Zeus, is forced to speed him on his homeward way.

Him she found beside the deep,
Seated alone, with eyes from which the tears
Were never dried, for now no more the nymph
Delighted him. He wasted his sweet life
In yearning for his home. Night after night
He slept constrained within the hollow cave,
The unwilling by the fond: and day by day
He sat upon the rocks that edged the shore,
And in continual weeping, and in sighs,
And vain repinings, wore the hours away,
Gazing through tears upon the barren deep.

The reply of Odysseus to the gentle nymph's last loving plea has a certain resemblance to the ancient myth of Marpessa, as recently retold by Stephen Phillips. Calypso had said:

"Farewell:—
But, couldst thou know the sufferings Fate ordains
For thee ere yet thou landest on thy shore,
Thou wouldst remain to keep this home with me,
And be immortal, strong as is thy wish
To see thy wife,—a wish that day by day
Possesses thee. I cannot deem myself
In face or form less beautiful than she;
For never with immortals can the race
Of mortal dames in form or face compare."
Ulysses, the sagacious, answered her
"Bear with me, gracious goddess; well I know
All thou couldst say. The sage Penelope
In feature and in stature comes not nigh
To thee, for she is mortal—deathless thou,
And ever young; yet day by day I long
To be at home once more, and pine to see
The hour of my return. Even though some god
Smite me on the black ocean, I shall bear
The stroke, for in my bosom dwells a mind
Patient of suffering; much have I endured,
And much survived, in tempests on the deep
And in the battle; let this happen too."

Like Marpessa, the hero turns away from an immortal, preferring the love of a fitter though less glorious human mate. The wanderer is not, indeed, so austerely faithful as is the loyal wife Penelope at home. Not only the gentle Calypso, but even the cruel enchantress Circe, who turns men into swine, had for a time shared his affections. Yet after his last shipwreck, when appealing humbly for help to the brave little princess Nausicaa, who had rescued him, he rises to a lofty key.

"May the gods vouchsafe
To thee whatever blessings thou canst wish;
Husband, and home, and wedded harmony.

There is no better, no more blessed state,
Than when the wife and husband in accord
Order their household lovingly. Then those
Repine who hate them; those who wish them well
Rejoice, and they themselves the most of all."

Nausicaa herself furnishes him, in roguish fashion, a glimpse of her own happy home.

"When thou art once within our court and hall,
Go quickly through the palace till thou find
My mother where she sits beside the hearth,
Leaning against a column in its blaze,
And twisting threads, a marvel to behold,
Of bright sea-purple, while her maidens sit
Behind her. Near her is my father's throne,
On which he sits at feasts, and drinks the wine
Like one of the immortals. Pass it by,
And clasp my mother's knees; so mayst thou see
Soon and with joy the day of thy return,
Although thy home be far. For if her mood
Be kindly toward thee, thou mayst hope to greet
Thy friends once more, and enter yet again
Thy own fair palace in thy native land."

The farthest voyage of Odysseus is to the land of the dead. Here he meets, among many besides, his own mother's lonely ghost. In her surprise at his arrival there, a living man, she exclaims:

"Hast thou come hither on thy way from Troy,
A weary wanderer with thy ship and friends?
And hast thou not yet been at Ithaca,
Nor in thine island palace seen thy wife?"

Even before mentioning his boyish son, or his distracted kingdom, his mother tells him of Penelope's faithfulness:

"Most certain is it that she sadly dwells
Still in thy palace. Weary days and nights
And tears are hers. No man has taken yet
Thy place as ruler, but Telemachus
Still has the charge of thy domain, and gives
The liberal feasts, which it befits a prince
To give, for all invite him. In the fields
Thy father dwells, and never in the town
Is seen; nor beds nor cloaks has he, nor mats
Of rich device, but, all the winter through
He sleeps where sleep the laborers, on the hearth,
Amid the dust, and wears a wretched garb;
And when the summer comes, or autumn days
Ripen the fruit, his bed is on the ground,
And made of leaves, that everywhere are shed
In the rich vineyards. There he lies and grieves,
And, cherishing his sorrow, mourns thy fate,
And keenly feels the miseries of age."

The Homeric preference for city luxury over rustic discomfort seems here plainly intimated, but especially striking is the simple strong appeal to filial love, to the tender memories of home and kin.

When Odysseus first lands on the loneliest shore of Ithaca, alone, disguised as a beggar, from the vessel of Nausicaa's kindly people, he is near to being torn in pieces by the watchdogs of his faithful swineherd. The latter, rescuing him, cries out:

"O aged man, the mastiffs of the lodge
Had almost torn thee, and thou wouldst have cast
Bitter reproach upon me. Other griefs
And miseries the gods have made my lot.
Here sorrowfully sitting I lament
A godlike master, and for others tend
His fatling swine, while, haply hungering
For bread, he wanders among alien men

In other kingdoms, if indeed he lives
And looks upon the sun."

"The gods themselves
Prevent, no doubt, the safe return of him
Who loved me much, and would ere this have given
What a kind lord is wont to give his hind—
A house, a croft, the wife whom he has wooed,
Rewarding faithful services which God
Hath prospered, as he here hath prospered mine.
Thus would my master, had he here grown old,
Have recompensed my toils,—but he is dead.
O that the house of Helen, for whose sake
So many fell, had perished utterly!
For he went forth at Agamemnon's call,
Honoring the summons, and on Ilium's coast,
Famed for its coursers, fought the sons of Troy."[1]

The bondsman's humbler ideal of bliss is like his master's. In hut or palace it is home, wife, rest from wandering, that make up happiness; though, as the swineherd himself says, the past wanderings may heighten the joy of present peace.

"For in the aftertime
One who has suffered much and wandered far
May take a pleasure even in his griefs."

A yet homelier and still more powerful bit of realism should not be omitted. When Odysseus, in the guise of an aged and wretched beggar, reënters his own gate, he is first recognized by his old hound.

There lay
Argus, devoured with vermin. As he saw
Ulysses drawing near, he wagged his tail
And dropped his ears, but found that he could come

[1] These echoes of the "Iliad" seem to be in the tones of a later age, less fond of war and violence.

No nearer to his master. Seeing this,
Ulysses wiped away a tear, unmarked
By the good swineherd, whom he questioned thus:
"Eumæus, this I marvel at,—this dog,
That lies upon the dunghill, beautiful
In form, but whether in the chase as fleet
As he is fairly shaped I cannot tell.
Worthless, perchance, as housedogs often are,
Whose masters keep them for the sake of show."
And thus, Eumæus, thou didst make reply:
"This dog belongs to one who died afar.
Had he the power of limb which once he had
For feats of hunting, when Ulysses sailed
For Troy and left him, thou wouldst be amazed
Both at his swiftness and his strength. No beast
In the thick forest depths, which once he saw,
Or even tracked by footprints, could escape.
And now he is a sufferer, since his lord
Has perished far from his own land. No more
The careless women heed the creature's wants. . . . ."
He spake, and entering that fair dwelling-place,
Passed through to where the illustrious suitors sat,
While over Argus the black night of death
Came suddenly, as soon as he had seen
Ulysses, absent now for twenty years.

The first words uttered by the hero, still *incognito*, to his wife, are noble and pathetic:

"O lady, none in all the boundless earth
Can speak of thee with blame. Thy fame has reached
To the great heavens. It is like the renown
Of some most excellent king, of godlike sway
O'er many men and mighty, who upholds
Justice in all his realm. . . . .
But of my race and home
Inquire not, lest thou waken in my mind
Unhappy memories. I am a man
Of sorrows. . . . ."

His old nurse, the faithful Eurycleia, is required to wash his feet, and recognizes her fosterchild by the great scar of a wound received many years before from a wild boar's tusk.

At once a rush
Of gladness and of grief o'ercame her heart.
Tears filled her eyes, and her clear voice was choked.
She touched Ulysses on the chin, and said:—
"Dear child! Thou art Ulysses, of a truth.
I knew thee not till I had touched the scar."
So speaking, toward Penelope she turned
Her eyes, about to tell her that her lord
Was in the palace; but the queen saw not,
And all that passed was unperceived by her,
For Pallas turned her thoughts another way.
Meantime, Ulysses on the nurse's throat
Laid his right hand, and with the other drew
The aged woman nearer him, and said:—
"Nurse, wouldst thou ruin me, who drew long since
Milk from thy bosom, and who now return,
After much suffering borne for twenty years
To mine own land? Now then, since thou hast learned
The truth, by prompting of some god, no doubt,—
Keep silence, lest some others in the house
Should learn it also. . . . ."

Amid the terrible scene of vengeance, when all the hundred suitors are slain in the great hall, the herald Medon, fosterfather of the boy Telemachus, is one of the two men that are spared. The other is the sweet-voiced court minstrel, who

went and clasped
The hero's knees, and said in wingèd words:—
"I come, Ulysses, to thy knees. Respect
And spare me. It will be a grief to thee,
Hereafter, shouldst thou slay a bard who sings
For gods and men alike. I taught myself

This art: some god has breathed into my mind
Songs of all kinds, and I could sing to thee
As to a god. O seek not, then, to take
My life! Thy own dear son, Telemachus,
Will bear me witness that not willingly,
Nor for the sake of lucre, did I come
To sing before the suitors at their feasts
And in thy palace, but was forced to come
By numbers, and by mightier men than I."
He ceased; Telemachus, the mighty, heard
And thus bespake his father at his side:—
"Refrain, smite not the guiltless with the sword;
And be the herald, Medon, also spared,
Who in our palace had the care of me
Through all my childhood. . . . ."

Here too is the appeal to the familiar home-feeling. These were really weaklings, who had not, like Eumæus, been steadfast to the absent overlord:—but the child of the house loved them of old, and pleads for them now.

The final scene of reünion shows that the crafty Odysseus had indeed chosen a wife after his own heart. She still doubts if some god may not have come down to slay the suitors and deceive her. She puts her truant lord to a cunning test, bidding the old Eurycleia draw his bed out from the chamber into the hall for him to lie at ease. But Odysseus and Penelope, with one trusted servant, alone know that this is impossible. The bed was built about the great trunk of a living tree. When he rather sternly reminds her of this, her last doubt is effaced.

He spake, and her knees fainted, and her heart
Was melted, as she heard her lord recount
The tokens all so truly; and she wept,
And rose, and ran to him, and flung her arms
About his neck, and kissed his brow, and said:—

"Ulysses, look not on me angrily,
Thou who in other things art wise above
All other men. The gods have made our lot
A hard one, jealous lest we should have passed
Our youth together happily, and thus
Have reached old age. I pray, be not incensed,
Nor take it ill that I embraced thee not
As soon as I beheld thee, for my heart
Has ever trembled lest some one who comes
Into this isle should cozen me with words;
And they who practice fraud are numberless.
The Argive Helen, child of Jupiter,
Would ne'er have listened to a stranger's suit
And loved him, had she known that in the years
To come the warlike Greeks would bring her back
To her own land. It was a deity
Who prompted her to that foul wrong. Her thought
Was never of the great calamity
Which followed, and which brought such woe on us.
"But now, since thou by tokens clear and true,
Hast spoken of our bed, which human eye
Has never seen save mine and thine, and those
Of one my handmaid only, Actoris,—
Her whom my father gave me when I came
To this thy palace, and who kept the door
To our close chamber,—thou hast won my mind
To full belief, though hard it was to win."
She spake, and he was moved to tears; he wept
As in his arms he held his dearly loved
And faithful wife. As welcome as the land
To those who swim the deep, of whose stout bark
Neptune has made a wreck amid the waves,
Tossed by the billow and the blast, and few
Are those who from the hoary ocean reach
The shore, their limbs all crested with the brine,
These gladly climb the sea-beach and are safe,—
So welcome was her husband to her eyes.

These passages, and others like them, set forth what

is really the central motive of the "Odyssey." But both the great epics should be diligently and repeatedly studied entire. Whether realistic, or, as the writer believes, purely ideal, the picture they portray is the first large view of European life we can descry. It is especially gratifying to see the honorable place held by women in the Homeric home. The later Greeks restricted her to a life more like that of an Oriental harem. For this and other reasons many students draw a fuller enjoyment from the "Odyssey" than from any masterpiece of the later Greek literature. Certainly no apology will be needed for the relatively large space here given to this humane, beautiful, and ennobling story: the long tale of Helen's sin and Troy's beleaguering: of the many heroes that perished and the few that came safe home. For compared with other literature, even in Greek lands and speech, Homeric epic is one and indivisible.

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There are rhymed translations of the "Odyssey" by Chapman, Pope (only a few books by his own hand), William Morris, Way, etc., and especially by Worsley in the nine-line Spenserean stanza. The last-named is closer than would seem possible, and has a romantic charm not quite Homeric. Bryant's blank verse is better suited to this poem than to the battle-scenes of the "Iliad." The Macmillan prose version by Butcher and Lang is excellent. Still easier, and more entrancing for a young reader, is Professor Palmer's rendering in "rhythmical prose."

CHAPTER IV

HESIOD'S WORKS AND DAYS

Rustic Thrift.

Many early epics, now lost save a few lines, were ascribed by the Greeks to Homer. Some thirty "Homeric Hymns" are still extant. Though they often preserve an early and interesting form of important myths, these hymns are centuries younger than the "Odyssey." Many of their lines are borrowed verbatim from the two great epics. One of these hymns, probably the oldest, was cited on an earlier page.

The name most frequently set beside Homer is Hesiod. Of the two extant poems credited to him, the "Theogony," a crudely philosophic attempt to set forth the origin of the universe and the complicated kinship of the many gods, is less interesting than the "Works and Days." This poem has for its chief lesson "In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou earn thy bread." The poet and his brother, whom he addresses, are farmers in a poor Bœotian village, Ascra. Much of the advice given is as homely as Poor Richard's or Thomas Tusser's.

Yet a poetic strain is also present. The dialect and metre are essentially Homeric. When he rises to loftiest subjects, however, such as the far-off golden age of the past, Hesiod is still always pessimistic. Even the championship of Prometheus has but hastened the swift degeneracy of man. The Pandora story, as told both here

and, somewhat differently, in the "Theogony," shows Hesiod to be a bitter woman-hater.

Some scholars regard the character of Hesiod as an imaginative creation; but he is more generally felt to be not merely realistic, but an actual person. Though lines and couplets could very easily be, and probably were, inserted from other poems, or even composed, much later, the "Works and Days" as a whole may well date back to the eighth century B. C. Its maxims often bring us very close to the common Greek life and feeling.

The poem exercised much influence on the later Greeks, and was the chief source for Virgil in his "Georgics." Here again, as with the "Iliad," however, we know little of the circumstances which created this mass of poetry, of the men who composed or first listened to it. Such a philosophic episode as the tale of Pandora, the "All-gifted," with its imaginative satire on feminine curiosity, can hardly come from the same hands as the homely maxims for rustic guidance. Many critics say the poem has no real unity or plan.

Pandora

From "Works and Days"

Zeus in the wrath of his heart hath hidden the means of subsistence,
Wrathful because he once was deceived by the wily Prometheus,
Therefore it was he devised most grievous trouble for mortals.
Fire he hid: yet that, for men, did the gallant Prometheus
Steal, in a hollow reed, from the dwelling of Zeus the Adviser;
Nor was he seen by the ruler of gods, who delights in the thunder.

Then, in his rage at the deed, cloud-gathering Zeus did address him:
"Iapetionides, in cunning greater than any,
Thou in the theft of fire, and deceit of me art exulting—
Source of grief for thyself, and for men who shall be hereafter.
I in the place of fire will give thee a bane, so that all men
May in spirit exult, and find in their misery comfort!"
Speaking thus, loud laughed he, the father of gods and of mortals.
Then he commanded Hephaistos, the cunning artificer, straightway
Mixing water and earth, with speech and force to endow it,
Making it like in face to the gods whose life is eternal.
Virginal, winning and fair, was the shape, and he ordered Athenè
Skillful devices to teach her, the beautiful works of the weaver.
Then did he bid Aphrodite, the golden, endow her with beauty,
Eager desire, and passion that wasteth the bodies of mortals.
Hermes, guider of men, the destroyer of Argus, he ordered,
Lastly, a shameless mind to accord her, and treacherous nature.
So did he speak. They obeyed lord Zeus, who is offspring of Kronos.

Straightway out of the earth the renowned Artificer fashioned
One like a shamefaced maid, at the will of the Ruler of Heaven.
Girdle and ornament added the bright-eyed goddess Athenè,
Over her body the Graces divine, and noble Persuasion,
Hung their golden chains, and the Hours, with beautiful tresses,
Wove her garlands of flowers, that bloom in the season of springtime.

All her adornment Pallas Athenè fitted upon her;
Into her bosom Hermes the guide, the destroyer of Argus,
Falsehood, treacherous thoughts, and a thievish nature imparted—
Such was the will of Zeus, who heavily thunders; and lastly
Hermes, herald of gods, endowed her with speech, and the woman
Named Pandora, because all gods who dwell in Olympus
Gave to her gifts that would make her a fatal bane unto mortals.

When now Zeus had finished the snare so deadly and certain,
Famous Argus-slayer, the herald of gods, he commanded,
Leading her thence, as a gift to bestow her upon Epimetheus.
He, then, failed to remember Prometheus had bidden him never
Gifts to accept from Olympian Zeus, but still to return them
Straightway, lest some evil befall thereby unto mortals.
So he received her—and then, when the evil befell, he remembered.
Till that time, upon earth were dwelling the races of mortals
Free and secure from trouble, and free from wearisome labor,
Safe from painful diseases, that bring mankind to destruction:
(Since full swiftly in misery age unto mortals approacheth.)
Now with her hands Pandora the great lid raised from the vessel,
Letting them loose; and grievous the evil for men she provided.
Only Hope was left, in the dwelling securely imprisoned,
Since she under the edge of the cover had lingered, and flew not
Forth; too soon Pandora had fastened the lid of the vessel.

Such was the will of Zeus, cloudgatherer, lord of the ægis.
Numberless evils beside to the haunts of men had departed;
Full is the earth of ills, and full no less are the waters.
Freely diseases among mankind, by day and in darkness,
Hither and thither may pass, and bring much woe upon mortals,—
Voiceless, since of speech high-counselling Zeus has bereft them.

Rustic Maxims

From "Works and Days"

Never a man hath won him a nobler prize than a woman,
If she be good; but again, there is naught else worse than a bad one.

But do thou store these matters away in thy memory, Perses!
Let not contention, the lover of mischief, withhold thee from labor,
While in the market-place thou art hearkening, eager for quarrels.

Once we our heritage shared already. Cajoling the rulers,—
Men who were greedy for bribes, and were willing to grant you the judgment—
You then plundered and carried away far more than your portion.
Fools were they, unaware how the whole by a half is exceeded:
Little they know how great is the blessing with mallow and lentils.

Truly the gods keep hid from mortals the means of subsistence;
Else in a single day thou mightst well win from thy labor
What would suffice for a year, although thou idle remainest.
Ended then were the labors of toilsome mules and of oxen.

Evil he worketh himself who worketh ill to another.

But remembering still my injunction,
Work, O Perses, sprung from the gods, that Famine may ever
Hate you, and dear may you be to Demeter of beautiful garlands—
Awesome one—and still may she fill thy garners with plenty.

Work is no disgrace; but the shame is, not to be working:
If you but work, then he who works not will envy you quickly,
Seeing your wealth increase; with wealth come honor and glory.

Summon the man who loves thee to banquet; thy enemy bid not.
Summon him most of all who dwells most closely beside thee;
Since if all that is strange or evil chance to befall thee,
Neighbors come ungirt, but kinsmen wait to be girded.

Take your fill when the cask is broached, and when it is failing.
Midway spare; at the lees it is not worth while to be sparing.

Call—with a smile—for a witness, although 'tis your brother you deal with.

Get thee a dwelling first, and a woman, and ox for the ploughing:
Buy thou a woman, not wed her, that she may follow the oxen.

This shall remedy be, if thou art belated in ploughing:
When in the leaves of the oak is heard the voice of the cuckoo
First, that across the unbounded earth brings pleasure to mortals,

Three days long let Zeus pour down his rains without ceasing,
So that the ox-hoof's print it fills, yet not overflows it,
Then may the ploughman belated be equal with him who was timely.

Pass by the seat at the forge, and the well-warmed tavern, in winter.
This is the time when a man not slothful increases his substance.

Shun thou seats in the shade, nor sleep *till the dawn* in the season
When it is harvest time, and your skin is parched in the sunshine.

Seek thou a homeless thrall, and a serving-maid who is childless.

Praise thou a little vessel; bestow thou thy goods in a large one.

Do not stow in the hollowed vessel the whole of thy substance;
Leave thou more behind, and carry the less for a cargo.
Hateful it is to meet with a loss on the watery billows;
Hateful too if, loading excessive weight on a wagon,
Thou shouldst crush thine axle, and so thy burden be wasted.
Keep thou due moderation; all things have a fitting occasion.

(*Closing Lines*)

Different men praise different days: they are rare who do know them.
Often a day may prove as a stepmother, oft as a mother:
Blessed and happy is he who, aware of all that concerns thee,
Wisely works at his task, unblamed in the sight of immortals,
Judging the omens aright, and succeeds in avoiding transgression.

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The rather old-fashioned metrical versions of Hesiod's two chief works by Elton, closer and more recent prose versions, and copious notes, are all contained in a most useful volume of Bohn's Classical Library. The metrical extracts here given appeared first in the volume "Successors of Homer," where the present writer's fullest treatment of Hesiod will be found.

CHAPTER V

LYRIC POETRY

Lyric poetry is probably the earliest form of literature. In almost any race or clan, the war chant, marching chorus, dirge, rhythmic prayer, song of victory, must be needed, and created, long before any sustained epic becomes possible. The "Iliad" has allusions to such earlier songs and singers. Yet we first hear of actual Greek lyric poets, by name, from the seventh century B.C. From 700 to 500 is especially the lyric epoch. Comparatively little has survived. In no field of Greek letters are our losses so fatal, or so much to be deplored. A few selections from this and later periods are given here, especially those that touch more earnestly the chief chords of life. A great part of the little lyrics collected in the "Anthology" are anonymous, and most of them are also post-classical in date; but they are often truly Greek in grace and finish.

A Patriot Soldier

Verily glorious is it, and sweet, to contend with the foeman,
Fighting for children and wife, in the defence of our land,
Holding the spear on high, and a stout heart under the buckler
Throbbing, when at the first cometh the shock of the fray.

—*Kallinos, 700 B.C.*

A Hero's Choice

How glorious fall the valiant, sword in hand,
In front of battle for their native land!
But oh! what ills await the wretch that yields,
A recreant outcast from his country's fields!
The mother whom he loves shall quit her home,
An aged father at his side shall roam;
His little ones shall weeping with him go,
And a young wife participate his woe;
While scorned and scowled upon by every face,
They pine for food, and beg from place to place.
Stain of his breed! dishonouring manhood's form,
All ills shall cleave to him, affliction's storm
Shall blind him wandering in the vale of years,
Till, lost to all but ignominious fears,
He shall not blush to leave a recreant's name,
And children like himself, inured to shame.
But we will combat for our father's land,
And we will drain the lifeblood where we stand,
To save our children:—fight ye side by side,
And serried close, ye men of youthful pride,
Disdaining fear, and dreaming light the cost
Of life itself in glorious battle lost.
Leave not our sires to stem the unequal fight,
Whose limbs are nerved no more with buoyant might;
Nor, lagging backward, let the younger breast
Permit the man of age (a sight unblest)
To welter in the combat's foremost thrust,
His hoary head dishevelled in the dust,
And venerable bosom bleeding bare.
But youth's fair form, though fallen, is ever fair,
And beautiful in death the boy appears,
The hero boy, that dies in blooming years:
In man's regret he lives, and woman's tears,
More sacred than in life, and lovelier far,
For having perished in the front of war.

—*Tyrtaeus, 675 B.C. Translated by Campbell.*

Crabbed Age and Youth

What's life or pleasure wanting Aphrodite?
When to the gold-haired goddess cold am I,
When love and love's soft gifts no more delight me,
Nor stolen dalliance, then I fain would die.
Ah! fair and lovely bloom the flowers of youth,
On men and maids they beautifully smile:
But soon comes doleful eld, who, void of ruth,
Indifferently afflicts the fair and vile;
Then cares wear out the heart; old eyes forlorn
Scarce reck the very sunshine to behold—
Unloved by youths, of every maid the scorn—
So hard a lot God lays upon the old.

—Mimnermus, 625 B.C. Translated by J. A. Symonds, Sr.

A Soldier of Fortune

Gift of my own good spear is the wine and the bread well-kneaded.
Leaning upon my lance quaff I Ismarian wine.
Bounden servant am I to Enyalios, ruler of battle:
Yea, and the Muses' gift glorious know I as well.

—Archilochus, 7th century B.C.

An Unconquerable Soul

Tossed on a sea of troubles, Soul, my Soul,
Thyself do thou control;
And to the weapons of advancing foes
A stubborn breast oppose;
Undaunted 'mid the hostile might
Of squadrons burning for the fight.

Thine be no boasting when the victor's crown
Wins thee deserved renown;
Thine no dejected sorrow, when defeat
Would urge a base retreat:
Rejoice in joyous things, nor overmuch
Let grief thy bosom touch
Midst evil, and still bear in mind
How changeful are the ways of humankind.

—Archilochus, translated by Wm. Hay.

"He Hath Put Down the Mighty"

All unto the Gods are subject: often out of wretchedness
Mortal men do they uplift who on the black earth prostrate lie:
Often also overturning them that prosperously march,
Flat upon their faces lay them. . . . .

A Womanly Retort

Something I fain would utter, yet am checked
By shame.

But if your wish were noble or virtuous,
If on your tongue naught ill had been quivering,
Then shame would not have closed your eyelids,
Fitting the words you would utter fitly.

—Alcæus and Sappho, 600 B.C.

Motherlove

I have a child, a lovely one,
In beauty like the golden sun,
Or like sweet flowers that earliest bloom;
And Cleis is her name, for whom
I Lydia's treasures, were they mine,
Would glad resign.

—Sappho. Translated by Merivale.

Eventide

Oh Hesperus! Thou bringest all things home;
All that the garish day hath scattered wide;
The sheep, the goat, back to the welcome fold;
Thou bring'st the child, too, to his mother's side.

—Sappho. Translated by Wm. H. Appleton.

Two Epitaphs for the Three Hundred Heroes of Thermopylæ

Go, tell the Spartans, thou that passest by,
That here obedient to their laws we die.

—Simonides, 500 B.C. Translated by W. L. Bowles.

Of those who at Thermopylæ were slain,
Glorious the doom, and beautiful the lot;
Their tomb an altar; men from tears refrain
To honour them, and praise, but mourn them not.
Such sepulchre, nor drear decay
Nor all-destroying time shall waste; this right have they.
Within their grave the home-bred glory
Of Greece was laid: this witness gives
Leonidas the Spartan, in whose story
A wreath of famous virtue ever lives.

—*Simonides. Translated by John Stirling.*

Frailty of Man

Hard is it to become a good man truly,
Foursquare in heart and hands and feet,
Without a fault, complete.
Methought not duly
—Sage though he was—Pittacos' maxim ran:
"'Tis hard" quoth he, "to be a noble man."
Only a god that prize may win.
Not wholly free is any one from sin,
For desperate disaster smites us still.
Each man is virtuous in his happy hours,
Evil in times of ill:
So most the mightiest men, dear to the heavenly powers.

—*Simonides.*

The Passing Hour

Take thy delight, my soul; another day
Another race shall see, and I be breathless clay.
Vain mortals, and unwise! who mourn the hour
Of death, not that of youth's departing flower.
For all, whom once the earth hath covered o'er,
Go down to Erebus' unjoyous shore,
Delight no more to hear the lyre's soft sound,
Nor pass the jocund cups of Bacchus round.
So thou, my soul, shalt revel at thy will,
While light is yet my hand, my head untrembling still.

—*Theognis, 540 B.C. Translated by H. H. Milman.*

The Best of Blessings

The best of gifts to mortal man is health;
The next the bloom of beauty's matchless flower;
The third is blameless and unfraudful wealth;
The fourth to waste with friends youth's joyful hour.
—*Anonymous.*

The Gifts of Peace

To mortal men peace giveth these good things:
Wealth and the flowers of honey-throated song;
The flame that springs
On carven altars from fat sheep and kine,
Slain to the gods in heaven; and, all day long,
Games for glad youths, and flutes, and wreaths, and circling wine.
Then in the steely shield swart spiders weave
Their web and dusky woof:
Rust to the pointed spear and sword doth cleave;
The brazen trump sounds no alarms;
Nor is sleep harried from our eyes aloof,
But with sweet rest my bosom warms:
The streets are thronged with lovely men and young,
And hymns in praise of boys like flames to heaven are flung.
—*Bacchylides, 450 B.C. Translated by J. A. Symonds.*

Lover's Bliss

Sweet in summer is snow for the thirsty drink; for the sailor
After the winter is past, sweet is the garland of spring:
Sweetest of all when two underneath one mantle are sheltered,
While by the twain at once told is the story of love.
—*From the Anthology.*

The miscellaneous collection of brief poems known as

the Greek Anthology is evidently gathered from many centuries of Hellenic song. So too the lighter verses known as the Anacreontics were composed by various later imitators of the real Anacreon, who sang of wine, passion, and song in the sixth century B.C.

The Cicada

Happy insect! what can be
In happiness compared to thee?
Fed with nourishment divine,
The dewy morning's gentle wine!
Nature waits upon thee still,
And thy verdant cup does fill;
'Tis filled wherever thou dost tread,
Nature's self's thy Ganymede.
Thou dost drink, and dance, and sing;
Happier than the happiest king!
All the fields which thou dost see,
All the plants, belong to thee;
All that summer hours produce,
Fertile made with early juice.
Man for thee does sow and plow;
Farmer he, and landlord thou!
Thou dost innocently joy;
Nor does thy luxury destroy;
The shepherd gladly heareth thee,
More harmonious than he.
Thee country hinds with gladness hear,
Prophet of the ripened year!
Thee Phœbus loves, and does inspire;
Phœbus is himself thy sire.
To thee, of all things upon Earth,
Life's no longer than thy mirth.
Happy insect, happy thou!
Dost neither age nor winter know;
But when thou'st drunk, and danced, and sung
Thy fill, the flowery leaves among,

(Voluptuous, and wise withal,
Epicurean animal!)
Sated with thy summer feast,
Thou retir'st to endless rest.
—*Cowley's translation.*

Greek lyric culminated in Pindar, a Theban poet who lived through the Persian wars. His chief contemporary rivals were the two great poets born in the island of Keos, Simonides and Bacchylides, uncle and nephew. All three wrote, as a rule, not very brief personal lyrics, but sustained poems for choral performance. From Simonides we have only fragments, or short complete poems, such as were quoted above. Of Pindar's work we possess one large section, those choral songs, namely, that immortalize athletic victors in any of the four great national contests, the most famous of all being the quadrennial Olympic games. All such strife for excellence and victory was accounted especially pleasing to the gods.

Beside these eighty Pindaric odes, a happy discovery in Egypt set, a few years ago, a score of Bacchylides' chief poems. Curiously enough, of these also fourteen are "Epinikia," songs for the triumph of athletes. Our own athletic revival in recent years gives an especial interest to this phase of Greek life.

Pindar's most famous prelude runs:

As he that with a lavish hand a cup doth lift
Plashing with dew of grapes within,
And proffers it, a gift,
To him who newly with his child is wed:
A pledge from home to home 'tis sped,
All-golden, of his treasure the most choice,
Wherewith the banquet shall rejoice,
And honors so his kin,—

Because the youth is made among his friends
Envied for marriage that such largess sends,—
So I the outpoured nectar which the Muses gave,
Sweet fruitage of the poet's soul, my lay,
Sending to them that bear the prize away,
Honor the heroes brave
Who at Olympia and Pytho win.

As to the dignity of his own task Pindar has no doubts. His masterpiece, the first "Olympian," ends with these proud words to Hiero, the great lord of Syracuse:

Men in various paths are great:
By kings the crest supreme is won; look not beyond.
Be thine aloft to tread thy space of time,
Mine ever with the victors to commune,
Myself among Hellenes everywhere
For skill in song illustrious.

The occasion of all this proud and lofty utterance is merely the victory of a saddle horse from Hiero's stables!

It would be doubly interesting if we could gather from these poets a truthful picture of such national Greek contests early in the glorious fifth century B.C. Each ode is largely taken up, however, with praise of the victor's ancestors or native city, and with a myth whose application we can usually only surmise. We do gain, at least, a lively general impression of the religious and patriotic fervor, the enthusiastic eagerness for success, displayed in these contests. Statues, gifts of money and other treasures, political and social distinction in the home city, were showered on the successful athlete. Yet the poet seems not to doubt that his own song is the most precious boon of all.

There is, however, no one of these songs for victors

which seems to make full and direct appeal to alien men. We can more fully enjoy a poem evidently composed for an Athenian audience, embodying one phase of that most famous Attic tale, the Theseus-myth. In its own fashion, or rather under true Hellenic forms, it seems to touch on the fatherhood of the divinity, the certainty of answer to the prayer of undoubting faith.

Athens is supposed, at the epoch here indicated, to be helpless under the wrath of her overlord Minos of Crete, and is compelled to send annual tribute of noble youths and maidens, to be devoured by the monster Minotaur in the famous labyrinth. Prince Theseus volunteers to share, or avert, their doom. The intended victims are here described as voyaging toward Crete on board the tyrant's own ship, when a new lawless caprice seizes on him. The courage of Prince Theseus on this occasion foreshadows his success in saving his comrades, and releasing Athens from the hateful tribute.

The Youths, or Theseus

Bacchylides

The vessel with the purple prow that bore
The steadfast Theseus and twice seven with him,
Beautiful youths and maids Ionian,
Was cutting Cretan waters; for the gusts
Of Boreas, sent by the illustrious
Athenè of the warring ægis,[1] fell
On the far-shining sail. Then the dread boon
Of fair-crowned Cypris[2] smote King Minos' heart.
His hand no more he from the maid withheld.
But touched her pale cheeks. Eriboia then
Upon Pandion's[3] gallant offspring called.

[1] The divine shield borne by Pallas Athenè in battle.
[2] Aphrodite. Her dangerous gift is passionate love.
[3] Pandion was an ancestor of Theseus.

Theseus beheld it. Underneath his brow
Dark rolled his eye, his heart within was gnawed
By pain unbearable; and thus he spake:
"Son of high Zeus, no more a righteous heart
Thou rulest in thy breast! Hero, abstain
From violence. Whatever from the gods
On us resistless Destiny bestows,
And Justice in her balance weigheth out,
We will endure, when doom appointed comes;
But thou, restrain thy soul from lawless deeds.
Although of men the mightiest, and born
By Phœnix's fair-named daughter underneath
The crest of Ida,—and of Zeus begot:
Yet wealthy Pittheus' daughter's child am I,
She with Poseidon, the sea's lord, did wed,[1]
And dark-tressed Nereids gave her golden veil.
And therefore, warlord thou of Gnossian men,
I bid thee check thy grievous insolence.
May I behold no more the light divine
Of lovely dawn, if thou unwelcome hand
On one among our youthful band shalt lay.
Rather will we our strength of arm show forth.
—The issue the divinity shall judge."
So spake the hero, valiant with the spear.
At his audacious courage stood amazed
The sailors, wrath was in the heart of him
That wedded Helios' daughter.[2] Then he planned
A strange device, and thus he spoke:
"O Zeus,
Omnipotent, my father, if in truth
White-armed Phœnissa bare me unto thee,
Send now from Heaven an undoubted sign,
Thy lightning fiery-maned!—
And if thee, too,
Unto Poseidon shaker of the world
Trœzenian Æthra did indeed conceive,

[1] Theseus, as son of Poseidon, claims to be of nearly equal birth with Minos, the son of Zeus.

[2] Minos had married Pasiphae, daughter of Helios the sungod.

Then cast thee boldly to thy father's halls,
And from the deep sea fetch this golden ring!
Thou'lt know if Kronos' son, the thunder's lord,
The monarch over all, hath heard my prayer."
That haughty prayer by Zeus supreme was heard,
And wondrous honor he to Minos gave,
Sending his child a signal clear to all.
He flashed the lightning; and his son beheld
The welcome marvel: toward the Heaven aloft
Both hands he raised,—and unto Theseus thus
The hero, steadfast in the combat, spake:
"Theseus, thou seest the undoubted sign
Of Zeus; and thou, to the deep-roaring sea
Betake thee, if thy father, Kronos' son
As well, accord thee honor more than all
That dwell on fertile earth."
Such were his words.
The Athenian's gallant heart was nowise quelled.
On the firm deck he took his stand, and plunged,
While eagerly the waters welcomed him.
Then melted was the son of Zeus in heart,
And bade them keep before the wind the ship
Fair-wrought.
The Fates devised another way.
Swift fared the vessel forward, and the blast
Of Boreas from behind her drove her on.
As seaward leaped the hero, terror fell
On all the band of young Athenians:
The tears were flowing from their tender eyes,
The while they waited for the heavy doom.
By dolphins, dwellers in the briny sea,
Great Theseus toward his knightly father's hall
Was borne, and to the gods' abode he came.
There he famed Nereus' glorious daughters [1] saw
With fear; for from their bodies splendor rayed
Firelike, and golden were the snoods that waved
About their locks. Then with their supple feet

[1] The sea nymphs.

They made his heart delighted as they danced.
He saw his father's large-eyed stately wife,
Dear Amphitrite, in her lovely halls.
A purple mantle she did put on him,
And on his curling locks a faultless wreath,
With roses dark, that on her wedding day
From crafty Aphrodite she received.
Whatever gods accomplish is, to men
Endowed with sense, nowise incredible.
Beside the shapely vessel he appeared!
The Gnossian chieftain's haughty hopes were crushed,
When from the stainless sea he issued forth,
To all a marvel! Bright about his form
The gifts of gods were gleaming. Then the maids,
Enthroned in beauty, raised a joyous cry
In new-won happiness: the waters roared;
His youthful comrades gathered to his side
And with sweet voices sang a hymn of praise.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

This is not a subject which can be very profitably pursued by the unaided student in English. For many excellent versions see Appleton's "Greek Poetry in English Verse," and Symonds' "Greek Poets." For Sappho, see the beautiful volume of Wharton, containing every fragment, with one or more translations of each. Theognis has been all too ingeniously rendered and reconstructed by Frere (Bohn Library). For Pindar there is a good prose version by Myers, and various older verse translations, from Gilbert West in 1749 to Moberly's and Morice's in 1876. The magnificent rendering of the first Pythian ode contributed by Professor A. G. Newcomer to the "Library of the World's Best Literature," is, we believe, but a foretaste of a most desirable larger undertaking. The enjoyable poems of Bacchylides are partially presented, in prose, in a thin volume by E. Poste.

CHAPTER VI

ÆSCHYLUS AND THE PROMETHEUS

The Heroism of Endurance.

At the beginning of the fifth century (in 490 and 480–79 B.C.) Athens twice played a leading part in repelling the invading Persians. With her political superiority came a still more decided preëminence in literature and art. Before Pindar and Bacchylides died, Attic tragedy arose. The careers of the three chief tragic poets are wholly included in the fifth century B.C.

In all Greek drama, it is essential to remember, the choral songs are the oldest element, the acting is an innovation. Æschylus, by adding a second actor, made possible a dialogue in which not even the leader of the chorus took a share. The whole performance was but a portion of a spring festival in honor of Bacchus or Dionysus, the favorite nature-god, and probably had little artistic or religious seriousness until Æschylus became its master. Three competing poets offered each four plays, three tragedies with a lighter after-piece. Æschylus usually, perhaps always, made the three—or even the four—plays parts of one great mythic action. The subjects are regularly drawn from the legends of a remote and fabulous past.

We have extant, for example, his three tragedies: on the murder of the home-returning Agamemnon, with the deadly vengeance wreaked, years later, on his wife and

her lover, by the young Orestes, and the final absolution of the latter from the guilt of matricide. So the three generations of King Œdipus' unhappy line made the three dramas of the Theban trilogy, though only one of these three plays survives.

Of the three, or four, Prometheus plays it is clearly the first that has come down to us. The fearless rebel, the stoical sufferer, the tortured divine friend of man, has always excited the warmest sympathy. Yet we know that Æschylus depicted also, in the later dramas of the series, his complete submission and confession of error. Indeed, the strength, the wisdom, the complete supremacy of Zeus, even his large benignant purposes, for men as well as for gods, must have been fully vindicated. Æschylus was quite too large-minded, and too devout, to see any chaotic or capricious element in the divine government of the world. Even in this first play, Prometheus has the sympathy, but not the approval, of every other character. Even Io, the homeless wanderer, is to be more than repaid for all her suffering, for through it the coming of her descendant Heracles, the deliverer of man and even of divine Prometheus, shall be made possible.

The play requires only two actors, an indication of early date. In the first scene Force is a mute, and Prometheus, also silent, is probably a wooden image. One of the actors could climb up behind this figure and speak his part in the later scenes.

PROMETHEUS BOUND

Prologue

HEPHÆSTOS, *the Smith-god, enters, followed by* STRENGTH *and* FORCE *dragging* PROMETHEUS

STRENGTH

To Earth's remotest plain we now are come,
To Scythia's confine, an untrodden waste.
Hephæstos! Thou the mandates must observe
Enjoin'd thee by thy sire; this miscreant
'Gainst lofty-beetling rocks to clasp in fetters
Of adamantine bonds, unbreakable.
For that the splendor of all-working fire,
Thy proper flower, he stole and gave to mortals.
Such crime he to the gods must expiate;
So may he learn the sovereignty of Zeus
To bear, and cease from mortal-loving wont.

HEPHÆSTOS

Ho! Strength and Force, for you the word of Zeus
Its goal hath reached, no obstacle remains;
But I of daring lack, a brother god
Fast to this storm-vexed cleft perforce to bind.
Yet so to dare is sheer necessity;
For grievous 'tis the father's words to slight.

(To PROMETHEUS)

Right-judging Themis' lofty-thoughted son,
Thee 'gainst thy will must I unwilling nail
With stubborn shackles to this desert height,
Where neither voice nor form of living man
Shall meet thy ken; but, shrivelled by the blaze
Of the bright sun, thy skin's fair bloom shall wither;
Welcome to thee shall glittering-vestured night
O'erveil the brightness; welcome, too, the sun
Shall with new beams scatter the morning rime;
Thus evermore shall weight of present ill

Outwear thee: for as yet is no one born
Who may relieve thy pain: such meed hast thou
From mortal-loving wont:—for thou, a god,
Not crouching to the wrath of gods, didst bring
To mortal men high gifts, transgressing right.
Hence shalt thou sentinel this joyless rock,
Erect, unsleeping, bending not the knee;
And many a moan shalt pour and many a plaint,
Vainly; for Zeus obdurate is of heart;
And harsh is every one when new of sway.

STRENGTH

Let be! Why dally and vain pity vent?
This god, to gods most hateful, why not hate,
Who thy prerogative to men betrayed?

HEPHÆSTOS

Awful is kindred blood and fellowship.

STRENGTH

True, but the father's word to disobey—
How may that be? Fearest not that still more?

HEPHÆSTOS

Alas! My much-detested handicraft!

STRENGTH

Why hate thy craft? for, sooth to say, thine art
Is no way guilty of these present woes.

HEPHÆSTOS

Yet would that it to other hand had fallen.

STRENGTH

All save o'er gods to rule, vexatious is,
For none is free, save father Zeus alone.

HEPHÆSTOS

Too well I know it: answer have I none.

STRENGTH

Haste then: around the culprit cast these bonds
Lest father Zeus behold thee loitering.

HEPHÆSTOS

Behold the shackles ready here for use.

STRENGTH

Cast them around his hands: with mighty force
Smite with the hammer, nail him to the rocks.

HEPHÆSTOS

The work so far is finished; not amiss.

STRENGTH

Strike harder yet: clench fast: be nowhere slack.
His wit will find a way where no way is.

HEPHÆSTOS

This arm, at least, is fast beyond escape.

STRENGTH

This too clamp firmly down: so may he learn,
Shrewd though he be, he duller is than Zeus.

HEPHÆSTOS

No one but he could justly censure me.

STRENGTH

Of adamantine wedge the stubborn fang
Straight through his breast now drive, right sturdily.

HEPHÆSTOS

Like to thy shape the utterance of thy tongue.

STRENGTH

Be thou soft-hearted: but upbraid not me
For stubborn will and ruggedness of heart.

HEPHÆSTOS

Let us begone; his limbs are iron-meshed.

STRENGTH (TO PROMETHEUS)

Here taunt away, and the gods' honours filching,
Bestow on creatures of a day; from thee
How much can mortals of these woes drain off?
Thee falsely do the gods Prometheus name,
For a Prometheus thou thyself dost need,
To plan releasement from this handiwork.

(*Exeunt* HEPHÆSTOS, STRENGTH, *and* FORCE).

PROMETHEUS

Oh holy ether, swiftly-wingèd gales,
Fountains of rivers and of ocean-waves
Innumerable laughter, general mother Earth,
And orb all-seeing of the sun, I call:
Behold what I, a god, from gods endure.
See, wasted by what pains
Wrestle I must while myriad time shall flow!
Such ignominious chains
Hath he who newly reigns,
Chief of the blest, devised against me. Woe!
Ah woe! the torture of the hour
I wail, ay, and of anguish'd throes
The future dower,

How, when, shall rise a limit to these woes?

And yet what say I? clearly I foreknow
All that must happen; nor can woe betide
Stranger to me; the Destined it behooves,
As best I may, to bear, for well I wot
How incontestable the strength of Fate.
Yet in such strait silence to keep is hard
Hard not to keep;—for, bringing gifts to mortals,
Myself in these constraints hapless am yoked.
Stored within hollow wand fire's stealthy fount
I track, which to mankind in every art,
Hath teacher proved, and mightiest resource.

Such forfeits I for such offences pay,—
Beneath the welkin nailed in manacles.

Hist! Hist! what sound
What odour floats invisibly around,
Of God, or man, or intermediate kind?
Comes to this rocky bound,
One to behold my woes, or seeking aught?
A god ye see in fetters, anguish fraught;
The foe of Zeus, in hatred held of all
The deities who throng Zeus' palace-hall;
For that to men I bore too fond a mind.
Woe, woe! what rustling sound
Hard by, as if of birds, doth take mine ear?
Whistles the ether round
With the light whirr of pinions hovering near.
Whate'er approaches filleth me with fear.

(*Enter chorus of Ocean Nymphs borne in a wingèd car.*)

CHORUS

Fear not! A friendly troop we reach
On rival-speeding wind this cliff forlorn;
Our sire's consent wringing by suasive speech,
Me swift-escorting gales have hither borne.
For iron's clanging note
Piercing our caves' recesses rang,
And bashful shyness from me smote;—
Forthwith on wingèd car, unshod, aloft I sprang.

PROMETHEUS

Alas! Alas! Woe! Woe!
Prolific Tythys' offspring, progeny
Of sire Oceanos, whose sleepless flow
All the wide earth encircles! gaze and see
Bound with what fetters, ignominiously,
I, on the summit of this rock-bound steep,
Shall watch unenvied keep.

CHORUS

I see, Prometheus, and through fear
Doth mist of many tears mine eyes bedew,
As, 'gainst this rock, parched up, in tortures drear,
Of adamantine bonds, thy form I view.
For helmsmen new of sway
Olympos hold; by laws new-made
Zeus wieldeth empire, impulse-swayed;
The mighty ones of old he sweeps away.

PROMETHEUS

'Neath earth, 'neath Hades' shade-receiving plains,
Sheer down to Tartaros' unmeasured gloom
Would he had hurled me ruthless, bound with chains
That none may loose;—So then at this my doom
Had no one mock'd,—nor god, nor other kind.
But now most wretched, sport of every wind,
Foes triumph o'er my pains.

CHORUS

Who of the gods a heart doth own
So hard, to mock at thy despair?
Who at thy woes, save Zeus alone,
Doth not thine anguish share?
But ruthless still, with soul unbent,
The heavenly race he tames, nor will refrain
Till sated to his heart's content;
Or till another, by some cunning snare
Wrest from his grasp the firmly-guarded reign.

PROMETHEUS

Yet e'en of me although now wrung
In stubborn chains shall he have need,
This ruler of the blest—to read
The counsel new, by which his sway
And honours shall be stript away.
But not persuasion's honied tongue

My steadfast soul shall charm;
Nor will I, crouching in alarm,
Divulge the secret, till these savage chains
He loose, and yield requital for my pains.

CHORUS

Daring thou art, and yieldest nought
For bitter agony; with tongue
Unbridled thou art all too free.
But by keen fear my heart is stung;
I tremble for thy doom—ah, me!
Thy barque into what haven may'st thou steer,
Of these dire pangs the end to see?
For inaccessible, of mood severe
Is Kronos' son, inflexible his thought.

FIRST EPISODE

PROMETHEUS

That Zeus is stern full well I know
And by his will doth measure right.
But, smitten by this destined blow,
Softened shall one day be his might.
Then curbing his harsh temper, he
Full eagerly will hither wend,
To join in league and amity with me,
Eager no less to welcome him as friend.

CHORUS

To us thy tale unfold, the whole speak out;
Upon what charge Zeus, seizing thee, doth thus
Outrage with harsh and ignominious pain?
Inform us, if the telling breed no harm.

PROMETHEUS

Grievous to me it is these things to tell,
Grief to be silent; trouble every way.
When first the heavenly powers were moved to rage,

And in opposing factions ranged their might,
These wishing Kronos from his seat to hurl
That Zeus forsooth might reign; these, counterwise,
Resolved that o'er the gods Zeus ne'er should rule;
Then I with sagest counsel strove to move
The Titans,[1] progeny of Heaven and Earth,
But strove in vain, for they, in stubborn souls
Of crafty wiles disdainful, thought by force,
An easy task, the mastery to gain.
But me, not once, but oft, my mother Themis,
And Earth (one shape with many names) had told
Prophetic, how the future should be wrought:
That not by strength of thew or hardiment
Should mastery be compassed, but by guile;
But when this lore I did expound in words,
They deigned me not a single look, whereon,
Of courses free to choose, the wisest seemed
Leagued with my mother, of my own free will
The will of Zeus to meet, siding with him.
And by my counsels black-roofed Tartaros'
Murky abyss primeval Kronos now
Engulfs with his allies. Such benefits
From me the tyrant of the gods received,
And hath requited with these base returns.
For, some way cleaveth aye to tyranny
This fell disease: to have no faith in friends.[2]
But touching now your question, on what charge
He thus maltreats me; this will I make clear.
When seated on his father's throne, forthwith,
He to the several gods was dealing out
Their several honours, marshalling out his realm;
But he of toil-worn mortals took no count;
The race entire he ardently desired
To quench, and plant a new one in its stead.

[1] These are the brothers of Kronos; one of them, Oceanus, appears in a later scene. The rest have been imprisoned ever since the war here mentioned. As Kronos had led in the assault on his own father, Ouranos or Heaven, so he is now dethroned by his son Zeus.

[2] Such sentiments of course appealed to the democratic audience in the Athenian theatre.

And none but I opposed his purposes;
I dared alone;—I saved the mortal race
From sinking blasted down to Hades' gloom.
For this by these dire tortures I am bent,
Grievous to suffer, piteous to behold.
I who did mortals pity, of like grace
Am deem'd unworthy,—But am grimly thus
Tuned to his will, a sight of shame to Zeus.

CHORUS

Iron of heart, ay, fashioned out of rock
Who at thy pangs thine anger shareth not,
Prometheus; for myself, fain had I shunned
This sight;—beholding it, my heart is wrung.

PROMETHEUS

To friends, in sooth, a spectacle of woe.

CHORUS

But beyond this didst haply aught essay?

PROMETHEUS

Mortals I hindered from foreseeing death.

CHORUS

Finding what medicine for this disease?

PROMETHEUS

Blind hopes I caused within their hearts to dwell.

CHORUS

Vast boon was this thou gavest unto mortals.

PROMETHEUS

Yea, and besides 'twas I that gave them fire.

CHORUS

Have now these short-lived creatures flame-eyed fire?

PROMETHEUS

Ay, and by it full many arts will learn.

CHORUS

Upon such charges doth Zeus outrage thee,
Nor aught abateth of thy miseries?
To this dire struggle is no term assigned?

PROMETHEUS

No other but what seemeth good to him.

CHORUS

How can this be? What hope? Seest thou not
That thou hast erred? But in what way hast erred,
That to unfold,—while me it gladdens not,
To thee is pain. Forbear we then this theme;
But from this struggle seek thou some escape.

PROMETHEUS

Whoso his foot holdeth unmeshed of harm,
For him 'tis easy to exhort and warn
One sorely plagued. But this I all foreknew;
Of will, free will, I erred, nor will gainsay it.
Mortals abetting I myself found bale;
Not that I thought, with penalties like these,
To wither thus against skypiercing rocks,
Doom'd to this drear and solitary height.
But ye, no further wail my present woes,
But, on the ground alighting, hear from me
On-gliding fate—so shall ye learn the end.
Yield to me, prithee yield, and grieve with him
Who now is wretched. Thus it is that grief
Ranging abroad alights on each in turn.

CHORUS

To no unwilling ears thy words
Appeal, Prometheus; and with nimble feet
Leaving our swiftly-wafted seat
And holy ether, track of birds,
I to this rugged ground draw near;
Thy woes from first to last I fain would hear.

(*Enter* OCEANOS, *riding on a griffin or seamonster.*)

OCEANOS

The goal of my long course I gain,
And come, Prometheus, to thy side.
This swift-winged bird without a bit I reign.
My will his only guide.
Compassion for thy fate, be sure, I feel;
Thereto the tie of kin constraineth me;
But blood apart, to no one would I deal
More honour than to thee.
That true my words thou soon shalt know;
No falsely glozing tongue is mine;
Come, how I may assist thee plainly show,
For than Oceanos a friend more leal
Thou ne'er shalt boast as thine.

PROMETHEUS

Ha! What means this? Art thou too hither come
Spectator of my pangs? How hast thou dared,
Quitting thy namesake flood, thy rock-roof'd caves
Self-wrought, this iron-teeming land to reach?
Art come indeed to gaze upon my doom,
And with my grievous woes to sympathize?
A spectacle behold;—this friend of Zeus,
This co-appointer of his sovereignty,
By what dire anguish I by him am bow'd.

OCEANOS

I see, Prometheus, and would fain to thee,
As subtle as thou art, best counsel give;
Know thine own self, thy manner mould anew,
For new the monarch who now rules the gods;
But if thou thus harsh, keenly-whetted words
Still hurlest, Zeus, though thron'd so far aloft,
Mayhap may hear thee, so the pangs which now
His wrath inflicts but childish sport may seem.
But come, O much-enduring, quell thy rage;
Seek thou releasement from these miseries;
Stale may appear to thee the words I speak;
Yet such the penalty that awaits, Prometheus,
On a too haughty tongue. But thou, e'en now
Nowise art humbled, nor dost yield to ills
But to the present wouldest add new woe;
Therefore, I charge thee, harkening to my rede,[1]
Kick not against the pricks, since harsh the king
Who now holds sway, accountable to none.
And now I go, and will forthwith essay
If I avail to free thee from these toils.
But be thou calm, nor over-rash of speech;
Knowest thou not, being exceeding wise,
That to the froward tongue cleaves chastisement?

PROMETHEUS

Much joy I give thee scatheless as thou art,
Though in all plots and daring leagued with me.
But now let be; forbear thy toil; for Him
Persuade thou canst not: Him no suasion moves;
Nay, lest the journey breed thee harm, beware.

OCEANOS

More cunning art thou others to advise
Than thine own self. By deed I judge, not word;
But fixed is my resolve, hold me not back;
For sure I am, yes sure, that Zeus to me
Will grant this boon, and loose thee from these pains.

[1] Advice, counsel.

PROMETHEUS

For this I praise thee, nor will cease to praise;
For nought of kindly zeal thou lackest; yet
Toil not, for vain, nor helpful unto me,
Thy toil will prove,—if toil indeed thou wilt;—
But hold thee quiet rather, keep aloof;
For I, though in mishap, not therefore wish
Widespreading fellowship of woe to see.
No tiro thou,
Nor dost my teaching need. Save thou thyself
As best thou knowest how. But be assured
I to the dregs my present doom will drain,
Until the heart of Zeus relax its ire.

OCEANOS

Know'st thou not this, Prometheus, that wise words
To a distemper'd mind physicians are?

PROMETHEUS

Ay, if well-timed they mollify the heart,
Nor with rude pressure chafe its swelling ire.

OCEANOS

True: but if forethought be with boldness leagued,
What lurking mischief seest thou? Instruct me.

PROMETHEUS

Light-minded folly, and superfluous toil.

OCEANOS

Still from this ailment let me ail, since most
The wise it profiteth not wise to seem.

PROMETHEUS

But haply mine this error may appear.

OCEANOS

Certes,[1] thine argument remands me home.

PROMETHEUS

Good! Lest thy plaint for me work thee ill-will.

OCEANOS

With him new-seated on the all-ruling throne?

PROMETHEUS

Of him beware that ne'er *his* heart be vexed.

OCEANOS

Thy plight, Prometheus, is my monitor.

PROMETHEUS

Speed forth! Begone! Cherish thy present mood.

OCEANOS

To me right eager hast thou bayed that word,
For my four-footed bird, with wings outspread,
Fans the clear track of ether; fain, in sooth,
In wonted stall to bend the weary knee.

(*Exit* OCEANOS.)

CHORUS

Prometheus, I bewail thy doom of woe;
From their moist fountains rise,
Flooding my tender eyes,
Tears that my cheek bedew. O, cruel blow!
For Zeus by his own laws doth now hold sway,
And to the elder gods a haughty spear display.

[1] Certainly.

Rings the whole country now with echoing groans.
The grand time-honoured sway,
Mighty now passed away,
Of thee and of thy brethren it bemoans.
And all who dwell on Asia's hallowed shore
Thy loud-resounding griefs with kindred grief deplore.
One only of the gods before thus bent
Have I beheld, 'neath adamantine pains,
Atlas, the Titan, who with many a groan
Still on his back sustains,
Vast burthen, the revolving firmament.
Chiming in cadence ocean-waves resound;
Moans the abyss, and Hades' murky gloom
Bellows responsive in the depth profound;
While fountains of clear-flowing rivers moan
His piteous doom.

SECOND EPISODE

PROMETHEUS

Think not that I through pride or stubbornness
Keep silence; nay, my brooding heart is gnawed,
Seeing myself thus marred with contumely;
And yet what other but myself marked out
To these new gods their full prerogatives?
But I refrain; for, naught my tongue would tell
Save what ye know. But rather list the ills
Of mortal men, how, being babes before,
I[1] made them wise and masters of their wits.
This will I tell, not as in blame of men,
But showing how from kindness flow'd my gifts.
For they, at first, though seeing, saw in vain;
Hearing they heard not, but, like shapes in dreams,
Through the long time all things at random mixed;
Of brick-wove houses, sunward-turned, nought knew,

[1] Divine Prometheus in this scene appears almost an allegory; a type of man's own progressive spirit, audaciously at war with the forces of nature that would crush him.

Nor joiner's craft, but burrowing they dwelt
Like puny ants, in cavern'd depths unsunned.
Neither of winter, nor of spring flower-strewn,
Nor fruitful summer, had they certain sign,
But without judgment everything they wrought,
Till I to them the risings of the stars
Discovered, and their settings hard to scan.
Nay, also Number, art supreme, for them
I found, and marshalling of written signs,
Handmaid to memory, mother of the Muse.
And I in traces first brute creatures yok'd,
Subject to harness, with vicarious strength
Bearing in mortals' stead their heaviest toils.
And 'neath the car rein-loving steeds I brought,
Chief ornament of wealth-abounding pomp.
And who but I the ocean-roaming wain[1]
For mariners invented, canvas-winged?
Such cunning works for mortals I contrived,
Yet, hapless, for myself find no device
To free me from this present agony.[2]

CHORUS

Unseemly woe thou bearest. Driven astray
Flounders thy judgment, and like sorry leech
Falling distempered, spiritless thou art,
Nor remedies canst find thyself to cure.

PROMETHEUS

Hearken the rest, and thou wilt marvel more
What arts and what resources I devised.
This chief of all; if any one fell sick,
No help was there, diet or liniment,
Nor healing draught; but men, for lack of drugs,
Wasted away, till I to them revealed
Commixture of assuaging remedies

[1] Conveyance, chariot.

[2] The similarity in wording with Mark xv. 31, is striking. The early Christian preachers often apply the name Prometheus to the Friend of man, crucified for them.

Which may disorders manifold repel.
Of prophecies the various modes I fixed,
And among dreams did first discriminate
The truthful vision. Voices ominous,
Hard to interpret, I to them made known.
Such were the boons I gave. And 'neath the earth
Those other helps to men, concealed which lie,
Brass, iron, silver, gold, who dares affirm
That before me he had discovered them?
No one, I know, but who would idly vaunt.
The sum of all learn thou in one brief word:
All arts to mortals from Prometheus came.

CHORUS

Not now for mortals beyond measure care,
Thy hapless self neglecting; since, in sooth,
Good hope have I that, loosen'd from these bonds,
In might thou'lt prove an equal match for Zeus.

PROMETHEUS

Nor yet nor thus is it ordained that fate
These things shall compass; but by myriad pangs
And tortures bent, so shall I 'scape these bonds;
Art than necessity is weaker far.

CHORUS

Who then is helmsman of necessity?

PROMETHEUS

The triform Fates, and ever mindful Furies.[1]

CHORUS

Is Zeus in might less absolute than these?

PROMETHEUS

E'en he the fore-ordain'd can not escape.

[1] All such vague conceptions are little more than types of cosmic law, which no being, human or divine, can violate.

CHORUS

What is ordain'd for Zeus save aye to reign?

PROMETHEUS

No further mayst thou question; urge me not.

CHORUS

Deep mystery, methinks, thou keepest veil'd.

PROMETHEUS

Turn to some other theme; not meet it is
Now to discourse of this, but close to wrap
In strictest silence; for, this secret kept,
Unseemly bonds I 'scape, and tortures keen.

CHORUS

Never may Zeus, who sole doth reign,
My will with adverse might oppose;
Nor I to serve the gods refrain,
With rites of slaughtered kine, where flows
Father Oceanos' exhaustless tide.
Neither in word may I transgress!
Deep in my heart's recess,
Steadfast for aye may this resolve abide.

'Tis sweet to run life's long career
By hopes attended strong and bold,
Feeding the heart in blithesome cheer;
But thee I shudder to behold
By myriad tortures rack'd in sore distress.
For thou, of Zeus unaw'd, hast still,
In pride and sheer self-will,[1]
Mortals, Prometheus, honoured in excess.

[1] This is indeed Prometheus' fatal error, of which he is reminded on every hand.

THIRD EPISODE

(*Enter* Io.)

Io[1]

What country? What race? Who is he,
Whom, rock-bound, I survey,
Storm-battered? What trespass hath thee
Thus doomed to destruction? Oh, say,
To what region of earth have I wandered, forlorn?
Ah me! The dire anguish! Ah me!
Again the barbed pest doth assail!
Thou phantom of Argus, earthborn;
Avert him, O earth! Ah, I quail,
The herdsman beholding with myriad eyes.
With crafty look, onward, still onward he hies;
Not even in death is he hid 'neath the earth;
But, e'en from the shades coming back,
He hounds me, forlorn one, in anguish of dearth,
To roam by the sea-waves' salt track.

STROPHE

Still droneth the wax-moulded reed,
Shrill-piping, a sleep-breathing strain.
Ah me! The dire anguish! Woe! Woe!
Ah, whither on earth do these far roamings lead?
What trespass canst find, son of Kronos, in me,
That thou yokest me ever to pain?
Woe! Ah, woe!
And wherefore with brize-driven fear[2] torture so
A wretched one, frenzied in brain?
Oh burn me with fire, or o'erwhelm 'neath the soil
Or fling me to ravenous beasts of the sea.

[1] This strange myth seems to have been first suggested by the appearance of the horned new moon, hurrying across the cloudy sky like a hunted maid, fleeing the jealous wrath of some Heavenly queen. The ten thousand eyes of wakeful Argus set to watch her are plainly the stars. The final escape of Io to Egypt may have been added to the tale when Greeks first heard of the horned Isis.

[2] Goaded by gadfly.

Begrudge not, O Lord! to my prayers to give heed.
Enough hath outworn me my much-roaming toil.
Nor wist I from torment how I may be freed.
The voice dost thou hear of the cow-horned maid?

PROMETHEUS

And how not hear the maid of Inachos,
Brize-driven, who the heart of Zeus with love
Doth warm, and now in courses all too long,
Through Hera's hate, is rudely exercised?

Io

Whence know'st thou to speak my sire's name?
Oh answer a wretched one's prayer;—
Ah me! The dire anguish! Woe! Woe!
Who art thou, poor wretch, who dost truly proclaim
My plague, with its frenzying torture?
What cure for my plague? If such knowledge be thine,
Forthwith to the sad-roaming maiden declare.

PROMETHEUS

Plainly I'll tell thee all thou wouldst learn.

Io

What time to me, poor outcast, yet must run?

PROMETHEUS

Nothing I grudge, yet shrink to vex thy heart.

Io

Care not for me more than to me is sweet.

PROMETHEUS

Thine eager wish constrains my tongue; give ear.

CHORUS

Not yet; to me my dole of pleasure deal;
Enquire we first into this maiden's plague,
Herself relating her sore-wasting fortunes.
Her residue of toil then teach us thou.

Io

I know not how I can deny your wish,
So in clear word all ye desire to know
That shall ye hear;—Yet I am shamed to tell
Wherefore, on me, forlorn one, burst the storm
Heaven-sent, and whence this form's disfigurement.
For evermore would nightly visions haunt
My virgin chambers, gently urging me
With soothing words;—"O damsel, highly blest,
Why longer live in maidenhood, when thee
Wait loftiest nuptials? For, by passion's dart
Inflamed is Zeus for thee, and fain would share
The yoke of Cypris.[1] Spurn not thou, O child,
The couch of Zeus, but to the grassy mead
Of Lerna hie thee, to thy father's herds
And cattle-stalls, that so the eye of Zeus
From longing may find respite." By such dreams
From night to night still was I visited,
Unhappy one; till, taking heart at length,
My night-born visions to my sire I told.
Then he to Pytho[2] many a herald sent
And to Dodona;[3] seeking to be taught
How best, by deed or word, to please the gods.
But they returned, announcing oracles
Of riddling import, vague and hard to spell.
At length to Inachos[4] came clear response,
By voice oracular commanding him
From home and father-land to thrust me forth,
At large to range, as consecrate to heaven,
Far as earth's utmost bounds. Should he refuse,
From Zeus would come the fiery thunderbolt,
And his whole race extirpate utterly.
Then yielding to Apollo's oracles,
He drave me forth, and barred me from his home,
Against his will and mine; but, forcefully,

[1] i. e. Aphrodite, goddess of love.
[2] Delphi, seat of the oracle.
[3] Another very ancient place of prophecy.
[4] Father of Io.

The curb of Zeus constrained him this to do.
Forthwith my shape and mind distorted were.
Then the earth-born herdsman,
Hot-tempered Argus, ever dogged my steps,
Gazing upon me with his myriad eyes.
But him a sudden and unlooked-for fate
Did reave[1] of life; but I, brize-tortured, still
Before the scourge divine am driven on
From land to land. The past thou hearest; now
If thou canst tell my future toils, say on,
Nor, pity-moved, soothe me with lying tales,
For garbled words, I hold, are basest ills.

CHORUS

Alas! Alas! Let be!
Never, oh never, had I thought
That words with such strange meaning fraught
Would reach mine ear,
Nor that such horrors, woes, such cruel ill,
So hard to gaze on, and so hard to bear,
With double-pointed goad, my soul would chill.
Fate! Fate! Ah me! ah me!
I shudder Io's woeful plight to see.

PROMETHEUS

The rest now hearken,
What trials this young maid hath yet to bear
From Hera. Thou too, child of Inachos,
Cast in thy heart my words, that thou in full
Mayst of thy weary travel learn the goal.
First, turning hence towards the rising sun,
Traverse uncultured wastes; so shalt thou reach
The Scythian nomads, who, 'neath wattled[2] roofs,
Uplifted dwell on waggons amply-wheeled,
And are accoutred with far-darting bows.
Approach not these, but skirting with thy foot
The sounding breakers, hie thee from their land.

[1] Bereave, despoil, rob.
[2] Platted or woven.

Hybristes'[1] river then—not falsely named—
Thou'lt reach; the ford, for hard it is to cross,
Attempt not until Caucasus thou gain,
Highest of mountains, from whose very brow
The river spouteth forth its might; forthwith
Its crest surmounting, neighbor to the stars,
Southward direct thy course until thou reach
The host of man-abhorring Amazons.
These will conduct thee, and right willingly;
Then the Kimmerian isthmus[2] thou shalt gain
Hard by the narrow portals of the lake,
Which it behooveth thee with dauntless heart
To leave, and traverse the Mæotic strait;
And evermore among mankind shall live
The mighty record of thy passage there,
For men from thee shall call it Bosporos.
Quitting the plain of Europe thou shalt come
To Asia's continent.—How think ye? say,
Seems not the monarch of the gods to be
Ruthless alike in all? For he, a god,
Yearning to meet in love a mortal maid,
Upon her did impose these wanderings.
A bitter wooer hast thou found, O maid,
For wedlock bond,—for what thine ears have heard
Account not e'en the prelude to thy toils.

Io

What boots it then to live? Why not with speed
Hurl myself headlong from this rugged cliff,
That, dashed upon the ground, I from my woes
Respite may find? Better to die at once
Than all my days to linger out in pain.

Prometheus

Ill wouldst thou bear, methinks, my agonies,
To whom it is not foreordained to die,
For death would be releasement from my woes,
Before that Zeus from sovereignty be hurled.

[1] "Outrage." Nearly all the geography here is imaginary.
[2] The Crimea.

Io

How? Shall Zeus ever be from empire hurled?

Prometheus

Thou wouldest joy, methinks, such hap to see.

Io

How should I not, who suffer ill from Zeus?

Prometheus

That thus it shall be it is thine to learn.

Io

By whom despoiled of his imperial sway?

Prometheus

Spoiled by himself, and his own senseless plans.

Io

But how? Declare, if telling bring no harm.

Prometheus

Wedlock contracting he shall one day rue.

Io

Divine or human? If permitted, speak.

Prometheus

What matters it? This may not be disclosed.

Io

Shall then his consort drive him from the throne?

Prometheus

Ay, a son bearing stronger than his sire.

Io

Is there for him no refuge from this doom?

Prometheus

No, none; unless I be from bonds released.

Io

Who shall release thee, 'gainst the will of Zeus?

Prometheus

One of thy progeny, 'tis so ordained.

Io

How so? shall child of mine free thee from bale?

Prometheus

Count ten descendants, and after them a third.

Io

Not easy is it this oracle to spell.

Prometheus

So neither seek thy proper grief to learn.

Io

Nay, hold not forth a boon and straight withdraw it.

Prometheus

Since ye are eager, I will thwart you not,
Nor will withhold what ye desire to know.
First, Io, thy vex'd course to thee I'll tell,
Which in thy mind's recording tablets grave.
When thou hast crossed the flood, limit betwixt
Two continents, fronting the burning East

Trod by the sun, then onward hold thy course.
Fierce northern blasts thou wilt encounter first;
Shun thou their downward rush, lest, unaware,
In wintry tempest thou be rudely caught.
The roaring sea-wave skirt thou then until
Kisthene's Gorgoneian plains thou reach,
Where dwell the Phorkides, maids grey with eld,
Three, swan-shaped, of one common eye possessed,
One common tooth, whom neither with his beams
The sun beholdeth, nor the nightly moon.
A far border-land
Thou next shalt reach, where dwells a swarthy race,
Near the sun's fonts, whence is the Æthiop[1] river.
Along its banks proceed till thou attain
The mighty rapids, where from Bybline heights
Pure draughts of sacred water Neilos sends.
He to the land three-cornered thee shall guide,
Encircled by the Nile.[2]
On the land's verge a town, Canobos, stands,
At Neilos' very mouth and sand-bar,—there,
Zeus shall restore thy reason,—stroking thee
With touch alone of unalarming hand;
Then thou shalt dark Epaphos bear, whose name
Records his sacred gendering, who shall reap
All regions watered by broad-flowing Nile.
Fifth in descent from him a female race,
Fifty in number, shall return to Argos,
Not willingly, but wedlock to avoid
Of cousins; these, with passion-winged hearts,
Falcons that follow close on doves, shall come
Chasing unlawful wedlock.
Woman's fell prowess shall o'er men prevail;
For every bride her spouse shall reave of life,
The two-edged weapon bathing in his neck.—
May Kypris visit in such guise my foes!—
But of the maids shall one, by love beguiled,

[1] This is the name for the upper courses of the Nile, whose sources, curiously enough, Æschylus believes to be in Asia.

[2] The Delta.

Her partner fail to slay;[1]—her will's keen edge
Blunted, she will of evils twain prefer
Repute of weakness to bloodguiltiness.
She shall a kingly race in Argos bear;
This to set forth at large needs lengthy speech;
But from this line shall dauntless hero spring,[2]
Bow-famous, who shall free me from these toils.
Such oracle my mother, born of eld,
Themis, hoar Titaness, to me rehearsed.
But how and where, to tell, needs lengthy speech,
Nor would the knowledge aught advantage thee.

Io

Ah me! ah woe is me!
Brain-smiting madness once again
Inflames me, and convulsive pain.
The gadfly's barb, not wrought with fire,
Stings me; against my breast
Kicks my pent heart with fear oppressed.
Mine eyeballs roll in dizzy gyre;
Out of my course by frenzy's blast
I'm borne. My tongue brooks not the rein,
And turbid words, at random cast,
'Gainst waves of hateful madness beat in vain.

Chorus. Strophe I

Sage was the man, ay, sage in sooth,
Who in his thought first weighed this truth,
And then with pithy phrase expressed—
That wedlock in one's own degree is best.
That not where wealth saps manly worth,
Nor where pride boasts its lofty birth,
Should son of toil repair in marriage quest.

[1] Hypermestra, whom Horace calls "magnificently untrue" to the promise given her father, to kill her cousin-husband.

[2] Heracles.

ANTISTROPHE I

Never, oh never, Fates, may ye,
Dread powers primeval, gaze on me
Sharing his couch who reigns above,
Or joined with son of heaven in ties of love!
For filled with dread am I to see
Io's love-shunning virgin-state,
Consumed in wanderings dire through Hera's hate.

EXODUS

PROMETHEUS

Yea verily shall Zeus, though stubborn-souled
Be humbled yet; such marriage he prepares,
Which from his throne of power to nothingness
Shall hurl him down; so shall be all fulfilled
His father Kronos' curse, which erst he spake
What time he fell from his primeval throne.
From such disasters none of all the gods
To Zeus escape can show save I alone;
I know it and the way. Let him then sit
Fearless, confiding in supernal thunder,
The bolt, fire-breathing, wielding in his hands;
For these shall not avail, but fall he shall,
A fall disgraceful, not to be endured.
Such wrestler now, himself against himself,
He arms for battle;—portent hard to quell;
Who flame shall find surpassing lightning's glare,
And crash more mighty than the thunder-roll;
Against this evil stumbling, Zeus shall learn
How wide apart are sway and servitude.

CHORUS

Such talk 'gainst Zeus thy wish, I trow, inspires.

PROMETHEUS

Both what shall be, I speak, and what I wish.

CHORUS

And must we look for one o'er Zeus to reign?

PROMETHEUS

Yea, pangs than these more crushing shall he bear.

CHORUS

How canst thou fail to fear, hurling such words?

PROMETHEUS

What should I fear, who am not doomed to die?

CHORUS

To keener struggle may he sentence thee.

PROMETHEUS

So let him then! All is by me foreseen.

CHORUS

The wise are they who worship Nemesis.

PROMETHEUS

Revere, adore, cringe aye to him who reigns,
For me, at less than nought I value Zeus.
For this brief hour let him both do and reign,
E'en as he will;—not long he'll rule the gods.

But yonder I behold the scout of Zeus,
Of this new potentate the servitor;—
Doubtless some news to herald he has come.

(*Enter* HERMES.)

HERMES

To thee, professing wisdom, steeped in gall,
Who 'gainst the gods hast sinned, on short-lived men
Prerogatives bestowing, thief of fire,
To thee I speak; the father bids thee tell

What nuptials these thou vauntest of, by which
Himself shall fall in sway, and nought in riddles,
But point by point explain; nor cause to me,
Prometheus, double journeys; for thou seest,
Not by such dealing is Zeus mollified.

PROMETHEUS

Full of high spirit and augustly mouthed
This speech, as fits an underling of gods.
Younglings, and young of sway, ye think to dwell
Henceforth in griefless citadels. From these
Have I not known two potentates[1] cast down?
Ay, and a third, now reigning, I shall see
In basest and most sudden overthrow.
Seem I to thee before these upstart gods
To quail or cringe? Far from it, nay, no whit.
But get thee back with speed the way thou camest,
For of thy quest thou'lt nothing learn from me.

HERMES

E'en by such haughty wilfulness before
Didst thou to these dire moorings waft thyself.

PROMETHEUS

This my ill-fortune, be thou well assured,
I would not barter with thy servitude.
This rock to lackey better 'tis in sooth
Than trusty scout be born to father Zeus.
Thus, as is fitting, scorn replies to scorn.

HERMES

Thou seemst to revel in thy present state.

PROMETHEUS

Revel? Oh might I in such revel see
My foes. And thee among them do I count.

HERMES

Me too thou holdest guilty of thy ills?

[1] Ouranos and Kronos, grandfather and father of Zeus.

PROMETHEUS

Shortly to speak, all gods I hate, whoe'er,
By me bestead, maltreat me wrongfully.

HERMES

By what I hear, not slight thy madness is.

PROMETHEUS

Mad let me be, if to hate foes be madness.

HERMES

Unbearable wert thou, if prosperous.

PROMETHEUS

Alas!

HERMES

That word, I trow, Zeus knoweth not.

PROMETHEUS

Time, as it waxeth old, can all things teach.

HERMES

But thou not yet hast sober wisdom learned.

PROMETHEUS

Else I with thee, a menial, had not talked.

HERMES

It seems thou'lt answer nought the sire demands.

PROMETHEUS

Grace since I owe him, grace must I repay.

HERMES

Thou floutest me as though a child I were.

PROMETHEUS

Art not a child, ay, simpler than a child,
If thou expectest aught to learn from me?
No torture is there, no device whereby
Zeus shall persuade me to reveal these things,
Before these woe-inflicting bonds be loosed.
Let then his blazing lightnings hurtle down;
With white-winged snow and earth-born thunderings
Let him in ruin whelm and mingle all;
For none of these shall bend my will to tell
By whom from empery[1] he needs must fall.

HERMES

Mark now if helpful this may seem to thee.

PROMETHEUS

Of old my course was looked to and resolved.

HERMES

Take heart, O foolish one, take heart at length
To deal discreetly with these present ills.

PROMETHEUS

Idly, as though a wave thou shouldst exhort,
Thou troublest me. Harbour no more the thought
That I, in terror at the will of Zeus,
Effeminate of mind shall e'er become,
And supplicate whom hugely I abhor,
With woman-aping palms to heaven upturned,
To loose me from these fetters. Not a whit.

HERMES

Much may I speak, it seems, and speak in vain;
For nothing moved or softened is thy heart
By prayers; but thou, like newly-yokèd colt,
Champing the bit, dost fight against the rein
Fiercely; yet futile the device wherein

[1] Empire.

Madly thou trustest; for mere stubbornness
Avails the foolish-hearted less than nought.
But mark, if unpersuaded by my words,
What storm and triple-crested surge of ills
Shall o'er thee burst escapeless. Yea: for first
With thunder and with lightning flame the Sire
This rugged crag shall rend, and hide thy frame
Deep in the rock's embraces rudely clasped.
But when time's lengthened course thou hast fulfilled,
Back shalt thou come to daylight. Then, in sooth,
Zeus' wingèd hound, the eagle wet with gore,
Shall of thy flesh a huge flap rudely tear;
Coming, unbidden guest, the livelong day
He on thy black-gnawed liver still shall feast.
But of such pangs look for no term, until
Some god, successor of thy toils, appear,
Willing to Hades' rayless gloom to wend,
And to the murky depths of Tartaros.[1]
Wherefore take counsel;—since not feigned, in sooth,
Is this bold threat, but all too truly spoken.
Trust me, the mouth of Zeus knows not to lie,
But every word completeth. So do thou
Look round, take heed, nor deem that stubbornness
Shall ever better than good counsel prove.

CHORUS

Timely to us the word of Hermes seems,
For he exhorts thee, dropping thy self-will,
To search for prudent counsel. Be advised!
For to the wise it bringeth shame to err.

PROMETHEUS

To me who knew them, hath he told
His messages, with utterance shrill.
But nowise I unseemly hold
That foe from foe should suffer ill.

[1] Hades is the abode of the dead; Tartaros, still deeper, is the prison-house of the old gods.

So 'gainst me now be hurled amain
Curled lightning's two-edged!
By thunder and spasmodic whirl
Of savage gales be upper air
Madly convulsed! Let hurricane
Earth from its deep foundations rend,
E'en from its roots. Let ocean's wave,
Surging aloft, tumultuous rave,
And foaming, with the courses blend
Of heavenly stars. Ay, let him hurl
This body to the murky gloom
Of Tartaros, in stubborn whirl
Of Fortune caught! Do what he will
My death he may not doom.

HERMES

From fools brain-stricken may one hear
Such counsels and such words. But say,—
What sign of madness lacketh here?
What respite knows his frenzied ire?
Nathless do ye, who thus console
With his sore pangs, far hence retire;
Go quickly, lest harsh thunder's bray
With terror smite your soul.

CHORUS

In other style exhort and preach,
If to persuade me thou art fain;
For all unbearable this speech
Which from thy lips hath burst amain.
How canst thou bid me consummate
A dastard's part? With him the worst
I'll brave, for I have learned to hate
Traitors, than whom no pest is more accursed.

HERMES

Then my forewarnings mark, nor dare
When tangled in fell ruin's snare
Fortune to blame, nor ever say

That Zeus hath plunged you, unaware,
In doleful plight; nay, truly nay,
But ye yourselves; for not untaught,
Not stealthily, by sudden blow,
Ye through sheer folly will be caught
In net of boundless woe.

PROMETHEUS

And lo in act, in word no more,
Earth totters;—from below
Loud bellows the discordant roar
Of thunder; lightning's wreathed glow
Blazes around me; dust elate
Rides on the whirlwind; forward leap
Of every wind rude blasts that sweep
In strife of rancour-breathing hate.
The sky is mingled with the deep.
Such turmoil to arouse my fear
Comes visibly from Zeus. Oh thou,
Mother revered! Oh upper air,
Who sheddest from thy circling sphere
The common light! Behold ye now
What pangs unjust I bear!

(PROMETHEUS *sinks out of sight.*)

This charge of injustice must have been retracted later in the trilogy. Yet it is no accident, that precisely this play, delineating the unrepentant and defiant rebel, was recopied and preserved from age to age. Shelley, himself in revolt against the political maxims and theological beliefs of his age and land, actually rewrote this drama, to make Prometheus successful in dethroning Zeus. But even gentle Longfellow and optimistic Lowell have exalted the Firegiver far beyond any classical poet's judgment of him. Any such modern treatment must be carefully distinguished from the ancient view. Æschylus does

indeed credit the Titan with higher motives than the mere trickery ascribed to him by Hesiod. But he is as unquestionably in the wrong, and foredoomed to failure, as is Milton's Lucifer.

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CHAPTER VII

SOPHOCLES AND THE ANTIGONE

Human Law vs. Divine ordinance.

While Æschylus had fought against the Persians early in the fifth century B.C., Sophocles was the friend and associate of Pericles, at the epoch of Athens' greatest power and splendor, in the next generation. The gods take relatively little part in his plays. Neither did he link three plots or generations together, like his senior. To him the individual seemed quite capable of working out his own doom. More even than either of his famous Œdipus-dramas, the fate of Antigone has always appealed to tenderest human sympathy. In the contest between human edict and divine law the heroine perishes fearlessly through the performance of a holy duty.

As the music of the choral interludes has perished, and the songs themselves have little essential connection with the plot, they are here omitted, as a rule. Next to Antigone the student's attention should be fixed on the character of King Creon,—narrow, jealous, unfit to rule, yet sincere, often wise in word though misguided in action. Ismene is not cowardly, but a typical woman.

The scene is before the royal palace of Thebes. The royal brothers Eteocles and Polynices have perished a few hours before by each other's hands. The invader, Polynices, had really the better title to the crown. Antigone and Ismene, who appear in the first scenes, are his sisters, and the new king Creon is their maternal uncle.

PROLOGUE

ANTIGONE *and* ISMENE *appear from the palace.*

ANTIGONE

O sister-life, Ismene's, twin with mine,
Knowest thou of the burden of our race
Aught that from us yet living Zeus holds back?
And even now what edict hath the prince
Uttered, men say, to all this Theban folk?
Thou knowest it, and hast heard? or 'scapes thy sense,
Aimed at thy friends, the mischief of thy foes?

ISMENE

To me of friends, Antigone, no word
Hath come, or sweet or bitter, since that we
Two sisters of two brothers were bereaved,
Both on a day slain by a two-fold blow:
And, now that vanquished is the Argive host
Ev'n with the night fled hence, I know no more,
If that I fare the better or the worse.

ANTIGONE

I knew full well, and therefore from the gates
O' the court I led thee hither, alone to hear.

ISMENE

There's trouble in thy looks; thy tidings tell.

ANTIGONE

Yea, hath not Creon, of our two brothers slain,
Honoured with burial one, disdained the other?
For Eteocles, they say, he in the earth
With all fair rites and ceremony hath laid,
Nor lacks he honour in the world below;
But the poor dust of Polynices dead
Through Thebes, 'tis said, the edict hath gone forth
That none may bury, none make moan for him,
But leave unwept, untombed, a dainty prize

For ravening birds that gloat upon their prey.
So hath our good lord Creon to thee and me
Published, men say, his pleasure—ay, to *me*—
And hither comes, to all who know it not
Its purport to make plain, nor deems the thing
Of slight account, but whoso does the deed,
A public death by stoning is his doom.
Thou hast it now; and quickly shall be proved
If thou art noble, or base from noble strain.

ISMENE

O rash of heart, if this indeed be so,
What help in me, to loosen or to bind?

ANTIGONE

Consider, toil and pain if thou wilt share.

ISMENE

On what adventure bound? What wouldst thou do?

ANTIGONE

To lift his body, wilt thou join with me?

ISMENE

Wouldst thou indeed rebel, and bury him?

ANTIGONE

My brother will I bury, and thine no less,
Whether thou wilt or no: no traitress I.

ISMENE

O all too bold—when Creon hath forbid?

ANTIGONE

My rights to hinder is no right of his.

ISMENE

Ah, sister, yet think how our father[1] died,
Wrapt in what cloud of hate and ignominy
By his own sins, self-proved, and both his eyes
With suicidal hand himself he stabbed:
Then too his mother-wife, two names in one,
Forbid with twisted noose her woeful life:
Last, our two brothers in one fatal day
Drew sword, O miserable, and each to each
Dealt mutual slaughter with unnatural hands:
And now shall we twain, who alone are left,
Fall like the rest, and worse—in spite of law,
And scorning kings, their edicts and their power?
O rather let us think, 'tis not for us,
Who are but women, to contend with men:
And the king's word is mighty, and to this,
And harsher words than this, we needs must bow.
Therefore will I, imploring of the dead
Forgiveness, that I yield but as I must,
Obey the king's commandment: for with things
Beyond our reach 'twere foolishness to meddle.

ANTIGONE

I'll neither urge thee, nor, if now thou'dst help
My doing, should I thank thee for thine aid.
Do thou after thy kind: thy choice is made:
I'll bury him; doing this, so let me die.
So with my loved one, loved I shall abide,
My crime a deed most holy: for the dead
Longer have I to please than these on earth.
There shall I dwell forever: be it thine
To have scorned what gods have hallowed, if thou wilt.

ISMENE

Nay, nothing do I scorn; but how to break
My country's law—I am witless of the way.

[1] Œdipus, who unknowing had slain his own father and married his mother.

ANTIGONE

Be this thy better part: I go to heap
The earth upon my brother, whom I love.

ISMENE

Alas, unhappy, how I fear for thee!

ANTIGONE

Fear not for me: guide thine own fate aright.

ISMENE

Yet breathe this purpose to no ear but mine:
Keep thou thy counsel well—and so will I.

ANTIGONE

Oh speak: for much more hatred thou wilt get
Concealing, than proclaiming it to all.

ISMENE

Not to attempt the impossible is best.

ANTIGONE

Hated by me, and hated by the dead—
To him a hateful presence evermore—
Thou shouldst be, and thou shalt be, speaking thus.
But leave me, and the folly that is mine,
This worst to suffer—not the worst—since still
A worse remains, no noble death to die.

ISMENE

Go if thou wilt, but going know thyself
Senseless, yet to thy friends a friend indeed.

[*Exeunt.*]

(*Enter chorus of aged royal counsellors, singing.*)

CHORUS

Lo, the sun upspringing! Fairest light we hail thee
Of all dawns that on Thebes the seven-gated

Ever broke! Eye of golden day!
Over Dirce's fount appearing,
Hence the Argive host white-shielded,
That in complete arms came hither,
Headlong homeward thou didst urge
Faster still with shaken rein.

But now of Victory be glad:
She meets our gladness with an answering smile,
And Thebes, the many-charioted,
Hears far resound her praises:
Now then with war have done, and strife forget!
All temples of the gods
Fill we with song and night-long dance;
And Theban Bacchus, this our mirth
Lead thou, and shake the earth!

(*Speaks*)

But lo the ruler of this Theban land,
Son of Menœceus, Creon comes,
Obedient to whose summons we are here.

FIRST EPISODE

CREON (*Appearing from the palace*)

Sirs, it hath pleased the gods to right again
Our Theban fortunes, by sore tempest tossed;
And by my messenger I summoned hither
You out of all the state; first, as I know you
To the might of the throne of Laius[1] loyal ever:
Also, when Œdipus upheld the state,
And when he perished, to their children still
Ye with a constant mind were faithful found:
Now they are gone, both on one fatal field
An equal guilt atoned with equal doom,
Slayers of each other, by each other slain:

[1] Œdipus' father.

And I am left, the nearest to their blood,
To wield alone the sceptre and the realm.
There is no way to know of any man
The spirit and the wisdom and the will,
Till he stands proved, ruler and lawgiver.
For who, with a whole city to direct,
Yet cleaves not to those counsels that are best,
But locks his lips in silence, being afraid,
I hold and hold him ever of men most base:
And whoso greater than his country's cause
Esteems a friend, I count him nothing worth.
For, Zeus who seeth all be witness now,
Not for the safety's sake would I keep silence,
And see the ruin on my country fall,
Nor would I deem an enemy to the state
Friend to myself; remembering still that she,
She only brings us safe; her deck we pace,
Unfoundered 'mid the storm, our friends and we.
So for the good of Thebes her laws I'll frame:
And such the proclamation I set forth,
Touching the sons of Œdipus, even now—
Eteocles, who fighting for this land
In battle has fallen, more valiant none than he,
To bury, and no funeral rite omit,
To brave men paid—their solace in the grave:
Not so his brother Polynices; he,
From exile back returning, utterly
With fire his country and his father's gods
Would fain have burnt, fain would with kinsmen's blood
Have slaked his thirst, or dragged us captive hence:
Therefore to all this city it is proclaimed
That none may bury, none make moan for him,
But leave him lying all ghastly where he fell,
Till fowls o' the air and dogs have picked his bones.
So I am purposed; not at least by me
Shall traitors be preferred to honest men:
But, whoso loves this city, him indeed
I shall not cease to honor, alive or dead.

CHORUS

Creon, son of Menœceus, 'tis thy pleasure,
The friend and foe of Thebes so to requite:
And, whatso pleases thee, that same is law,
Both for our Theban dead and us who live.[1]

CREON

Look to it, then, my bidding is performed.

CHORUS

Upon some younger man impose this burden.

CREON

To watch the body, sentinels are set.

CHORUS

What service more then wouldst thou lay on us?

CREON

That ye resist whoever disobeys.

CHORUS

Who is so senseless that desires to die?

CREON

The penalty is death: yet hopes deceive,
And men wax foolish oft through greed of gain.

SENTINEL (*Entering*)

That I come hither, king, nimble of foot,
And breathless with my haste I'll not profess:
For many a doubtful halt upon the way
And many a wheel to the right-about, I had,
Oft as my prating heart gave counsel, "Fool,
What ails thee going into the lion's mouth?"
Then "Blockhead, wilt thou tarry? if Creon learns
This from another man, shalt thou not smart?"
So doubtfully I fared—much haste, scant speed—

[1] He has the power: they will not say, he has the right.

And, if the way was short, 'twas long to me.
But to come hither to thee prevailed at last,
And, though the speech be nought, yet I will speak.
For I have come fast clutching at the hope
That nought's to suffer but what fate decrees.

CREON

What is it that hath troubled thus thy mind?

SENTINEL

First for myself let me this say: the deed
I neither did, nor say who was the doer,
And 'twere not just that I should suffer harm.

CREON

Wisely, thyself in covert, at the mark
Thou aimest: some shrewd news, methinks, thou'lt tell.

SENTINEL

Danger to face, well may a man be cautious.

CREON

Speak then, and go thy way, and make an end.

SENTINEL

Then will I speak. Some one even now hath buried
The body and is gone; with thirsty dust
Sprinkling it o'er, and paying observance due.

CREON

How? By what man was dared a deed so rash?

SENTINEL

I cannot tell. No mattock's stroke indeed,
Nor spade's upcast was there; hard was the ground,
Baked dry, unbroken: track of chariot-wheels
Was none, nor any sign who did this thing.
But he who kept the watch at earliest dawn
Showed to us all—a mystery, hard to clear.
Not buried was the dead man, but concealed,

With dust besprinkled, as for fear of sin:[1]
And neither of dog nor any beast of prey,
That came, that tore the body, found we trace.
Then bitter words were bandied to and fro,
Denouncing each the other; and soon to blows
Our strife had grown—was none would keep the peace—
For every one was guilty of the deed,
And none confessed, but all denied they knew.
So all in vain we questioned: and at last
One spake, and all who heard him, bowed by fear,
Bent to the earth their faces, knowing not
How to gainsay, nor doing what he said
How we might 'scape mischance. This deed to thee
He urged that we should show, and hide it not.
And his advice prevailed, and by the lot
To luckless me this privilege befell.
Unwilling and unwelcome is my errand,
A bearer of ill news, whom no man loves.

CHORUS

O king, my thought hath counselled me long since,
Haply this deed is ordered by the gods.[2]

CREON

Cease, ere my wrath is kindled at thy speech,
Lest thou be found an old man and a fool.
Intolerably thou pratest of the gods,
That they to yonder dead man have respect.
Yea, for what service with exceeding honour
Sought they his burial, who came here to burn
Their pillared shrines and temple-offerings,
And of their land and of their laws make havoc?
Or seest thou that the gods allow the wicked?
Not so: but some impatient of my will
Among my people made a murmuring,
Shaking their heads in secret, to the yoke

[1] Three handfuls of dust constituted technical burial, and any passer-by who refused so much might fear the curse of the dead.

[2] This is a timid protest against Creon's decree.

With stubborn necks unbent, and hearts disloyal.
Full certainly I know that they with bribes
Have on these men prevailed to do this deed.
Of all the evils current in this world
Most mischievous is gold. This hath laid waste
Fair cities, and unpeopled homes of men;
But, who took hire to execute this work,
Wrought to his own undoing at the last.
Since, if the dread of Zeus I still revere,
Be well assured—and what I speak I swear—
Unless the author of this burial
Ye find, and in my sight produce him here,
For you mere death shall not suffice, until
Gibbeted alive this outrage ye disclose,
That ye may know what gains are worth the winning,
And henceforth clutch the wiselier, having learnt
That to seek gain in all things is not well.

SENTINEL

May I speak a word, or thus am I dismissed?

CREON

Know'st thou not that ev'n now thy voice offends?

SENTINEL

Alas!
'Tis pity men should judge, yet judge amiss.

CREON

Talk you of "judging" glibly as you may—
Who did this deed, I'll know, or ye shall own
That all your wondrous winnings end in loss.

SENTINEL

With all my heart I wish he may be found:
But found or no—for that's as fortune will—
I shall not show my face to you again.
Great cause I have to thank the gracious gods,
Saved past all hope and reckoning even now.

Omitting a choral song of some length, we pass to the

SECOND EPISODE

CHORUS

What strange portentous sight is this,
I doubt my eyes, beholding? This—
How shall I gainsay what I know?—
This maiden *is*—Antigone!
Daughter of Œdipus,
Hapless child of a hapless sire,
What hast thou done? It cannot be
That thou hast transgressed the king's command—
That, taken in folly, *thee* they bring!

SENTINEL

This same is she that did the burial:
We caught her in the act. But where's the king?

CHORUS

Back from the palace in good time he comes.

CREON

What chance is this, to which my steps are timed?

SENTINEL

Nothing, sir king, should men swear not to do;
For second thoughts to first thoughts give the lie.
Hither, I made full sure, I scarce should come
Back, by your threats beruffled as I was.
Yet here, surprised by most unlooked-for joy,
That trifles all delights that e'er I knew,
I bring you—though my coming breaks my oath—
This maiden, whom, busied about the corpse,
We captured. This time were no lots to throw:
My own good fortune this, and none but mine.
Now therefore, king, take her yourself and try her,

And question as you will: but I have earned
Full clearance and acquittal of this coil.

CREON

How was she seen, and taken in the act?

SENTINEL

So it fell out. When I had gone from hence,
With thy loud threats yet sounding in my ears,
We swept off all the dust that hid the limbs,
And to the light stripped bare the clammy corpse,
And on the hill's brow sat, and faced the wind,
Choosing a spot clear of the body's stench.
Roundly we chid each other to the work;
"No sleeping at your post there," was our word.
So did we keep the watch, till in mid-heaven
The sun's bright-burning orb above us hung,
With fierce noon-heat: and now a sudden blast
Swept, and a storm of dust, that vexed the sky
And choked the plain, and all the leaves o' the trees
O' the plain were marred, and the wide heaven it filled:
We with shut eyes the heaven-sent plague endured.
And when, after long time, its force was spent,
We saw this maiden, and a bitter cry
She poured, as of a wailing bird that sees
Her empty nest dismantled of its brood:
So she, when she espied the body bare,
Cried out and wept, and many a grievous curse
Upon their heads invoked by whom 'twas done.
And thirsty dust she sprinkled with her hands,
And lifted up an urn, fair-wrought of brass,
And with thrice-poured libations crowned the dead.
We saw it and we hasted, and at once,
All undismayed, our captive, hemmed her round,
And with the two offences charged her there,
Both first and last. Nothing did she deny,
But made me glad and sorry, owning all.
For to have slipped one's own neck from the noose

Is sweet, yet no one likes to get his friends
In trouble: but my nature is to make
All else of small account, so I am safe.[1]

CREON

Speak thou, who bendest on the earth thy gaze,
Are these things, which are witnessed, true or false?

ANTIGONE

Not false, but true: that which he saw, he speaks.

CREON

So, sirrah, thou art free; go where thou wilt,
Loosed from the burden of this heavy charge.

(*Exit* SENTINEL)

But tell me thou—and let thy speech be brief—
The edict hadst thou heard, which this forbade?

ANTIGONE

I could not choose but hear what all men heard.

CREON

And didst thou dare to disobey the law?

ANTIGONE

Nowise from Zeus, methought, this edict came,
Nor Justice, that abides among the gods
In Hades, who ordained these laws for men.
Nor did I deem *thine* edicts of such force
That they, a mortal's bidding, should o'erride
Unwritten laws, eternal in the heavens.
Not of to-day or yesterday are these,
But live from everlasting, and from whence
They sprang, none knoweth. I would not, for the breach
Of these, through fear of any human pride,
To heaven atone. I knew that I must die:

[1] Antigone's return here described is almost more courageous than her original resolve and deed. The frank and light-hearted selfishness of the loquacious guardsman is set in most artistic contrast with her serene self-sacrifice.

How else? Without thine edict, that were so.
And if before my time, why, this were gain.
Compassed about with ills who lives, as I,
Death, to such life as his, must needs be gain.
So is it to me to undergo this doom
No grief at all: but had I left my brother,
My mother's child, unburied where he lay,
Then had I grieved; but now this grieves me not.
Senseless I seem to thee, so doing? Belike
A senseless judgment finds me void of sense.

CHORUS

How in the child the sternness of the sire
Shows stern, before the storm untaught to bend!

CREON

Yet know full well that such o'er-stubborn wills
Are broken most of all, as sturdiest steel,
Of an untempered hardness, fresh from forge,
Most surely snapped and shivered should ye see.
Insult on insult heaped! Was't not enough
My promulgated laws to have transgressed,
But, having done it, face to face with me
She boasts of this and glories in the deed?
I surely am the woman, she the man,
If she defies my power, and I submit.
Be she my sister's child, or sprung from one
More near of blood than all my house to me,
Not so shall they escape my direst doom—
She and her sister: for I count her too
Guilty no less of having planned this work.
Go, call her hither: in the house I saw her
Raving ev'n now, nor mistress of her thoughts.

ANTIGONE

To kill me—wouldst thou more with me than this?

CREON

This is enough: I do desire no more.

ANTIGONE

Why dost thou then delay? I have no pleasure
To hear thee speak—have not and would not have:
Nor less distasteful is my speech to thee.
Yet how could I have won myself a praise
More honourable than this, of burying
My brother? This from every voice should win
Approval, might but fear men's lips unseal.
But kings are fortunate—not least in this,
That they may do and speak what things they will.

CREON

All Thebes sees this with other eyes than thine.

ANTIGONE

They see as I, but bate their breath to thee.

CREON

And art thou not ashamed, from them to differ?

ANTIGONE

To reverence a brother is not shameful.

CREON

And was not he who died for Thebes thy brother?

ANTIGONE

One mother bore us, and one sire begat.

CREON

Yet, honouring both, thou dost dishonour him.

ANTIGONE

He in the grave will not subscribe to this.

CREON

How, if no less thou dost revere the guilty?

ANTIGONE

'Twas not his slave that perished, but his brother.

CREON

The enemy of this land: its champion, he.

ANTIGONE

Yet Death of due observance must not fail.

CREON

Go to the shades, and, if thou'lt love, love there:
No woman, while I live, shall master me.

CHORUS

See, from the palace comes Ismene—
Sisterly drops from her eyes down-shedding:
Clouded her brows droop, heavy with sorrow;
And the blood-red tinge of a burning blush
Covers her beautiful downcast face.

CREON

Thou, who hast crept, a serpent in my home,
Draining my blood, unseen; and I knew not
Rearing two pests, to overset my throne;
Speak—wilt thou too confess that in this work
Thou hadst a hand, or swear thou didst not know?

ISMENE

I'll say the deed was mine, if she consents:
My share of the blame I bear, and do not shrink.

ANTIGONE

Justice forbids thy claim: neither didst thou
Agree, nor I admit thee to my counsels.

ISMENE

I am not ashamed, in thine extremity,
To make myself companion of thy fate.

ANTIGONE

Whose was the deed, know Hades and the dead:
I love not friends, who talk of friendliness.[1]

[1] If some of Antigone's speeches seem harsh, it must be remembered that she is striving to save her sister's life.

ISMENE

Sister, disdain me not, but let me pour
My blood with thine, an offering to the dead.

ANTIGONE

Leave me to die alone, nor claim the work
Thou wouldst not help. My death will be enough.

ISMENE

What joy have I to live, when thou art gone?

ANTIGONE

Ask Creon that: thou art of kin to him.

ISMENE

Why wilt thou grieve me with thy needless taunts?

ANTIGONE

If I mock thee, 'tis with a heavy heart.

ISMENE

What may I do to serve thee even now?

ANTIGONE

Look to thyself: I grudge thee not thy safety.

CREON

One of these two, methinks, proves foolish now;
The other's folly with her life began.

ISMENE

Nay, for, O king, misfortunes of the wise
To madness turn the wisdom that they have.

CREON

'Tis so with thee, choosing to share her guilt.

ISMENE

How should I live alone, without my sister?

CREON

Call her not thine: thou hast no sister now.

ISMENE

But wilt thou tear her from thy son's embrace? [1]

CREON

Are there no women in the world but she?

ISMENE

Not as their faith was plighted, each to each.

CREON

An evil wife I like not for my son.

ANTIGONE

Hæmon! beloved! hear not thy father's scorn.

CREON

Thou and thy love to me are wearisome.

CHORUS

Wilt thou indeed snatch from thy son his bride?

CREON

'Tis death that will unloose their marriage-bond.

CHORUS

It seems thou art resolved that she must die?

CREON

Of that we are agreed. Delay no more:
Ye, servants, lead them in. For from this time
Women they needs must be, and range no more:
Since ev'n the bold may play the runaway,
When death he sees close-creeping on his life.

[1] This is our first hint of Antigone's engagement to her cousin Hæmon.

THIRD EPISODE

(*The princesses are led into the palace.*)

CHORUS

See, thy son Hæmon comes hither, of all
Thy children the last. Comes he lamenting
The doom of the maiden, his bride Antigone—
And the frustrated hope of his marriage?

CREON

Soon we shall know, better than seers could say.
My son, in anger art thou come to me,
Hearing the sentence, not to be reversed,
Which on thy destined bride I have pronounced?
Or am I still thy friend, do what I may?

HÆMON

Father, I am in thy hand: with thy wise counsels
Thou dost direct me; these I shall obey.

CREON

Be this thy dearest wish and next thy heart,
In all things to uphold thy father's will.
For to this end men crave to see grow up
Obedient children round them in their homes.
Never, my son, let for a woman's sake
Reason give way to sense, but know full well
Cold is the pleasure that he clasps, who woos
An evil woman to his board and bed.
What wounds so deeply as an evil friend?
Count then this maiden as thine enemy,
Loathe her, and give her leave, in that dark world
To which she goes, to marry with another.
He who to his own kith and kin does right,
Will in the state deal righteously with all.
Of such a man I shall not fear to boast,
Well he can rule, and well he would obey,
And in the storm of battle at his post

Firm he would stand, a comrade staunch and true.
But praise from me that man shall never have,
Who either boldly thrusts aside the law
Or takes upon him to instruct his rulers,
Whom, by the state empowered, he should obey,
In little and in much, in right and wrong.
The worst of evils is to disobey.
Cities by this are ruined, homes of men
Made desolate by this; this in the battle
Breaks into headlong rout the wavering line;
The steadfast ranks, the many lives unhurt,
Are to obedience due. We must defend
The government and order of the state,
And not be governed by a wilful girl.
We'll yield our place up, if we must, to men;
To women that we stooped, shall not be said.

CHORUS

Unless an old man's judgment is at fault,
These words of thine, we deem, are words of wisdom.

HÆMON

Reason, my father, in the mind of man,
Noblest of all their gifts, the gods implant,
And how to find thy reasoning at fault,
I know not, and to learn I should be loth;
Yet for another it might not be amiss.
But I for thee am vigilant to mark
All that men say, or do, or find to blame.
Thy presence awes the simple citizen
From speaking words that shall not please thine ear,
But I hear what they whisper in the dark,
And how the city for this maid laments,
That of all women she the least deserving
Dies for most glorious deeds a death most cruel.
Who her own brother, fall'n among the slain,
Left not unburied there, to be devoured
By ravening dogs or any bird o' the air:—

"Should not her deed be blazoned all in gold?"
Upon the darkness still such whisper grows.
But I of all possessions that I have
Prize most, my father, thy prosperity.
Welldoing and fair fame of sire to son,
Of son to sire, is noblest ornament.
Cleave not, I pray thee, to this constant mind,
That what thou sayest, and nought beside, is truth
For men who think that only they are wise,
None eloquent, right-minded none, but they,
Often, when searched, prove empty. 'Tis no shame,
Ev'n if a man be wise, that he should yet
Learn many things, and not hold out too stiffly.
Cease from thy wrath; be not inexorable:
For if despite my youth I too may think
My thought, I'll say that best it is by far
That men should be all-knowing if they may,
But if—as oft the scale inclines not so—
Why then by good advice 'tis good to learn.

CHORUS

What in thy son's speech, king, is seasonable
'Tis fit thou shouldst receive: and thou in his:
For there is reason in the words of both.

CREON

Shall I, grown grey with age, be taught indeed—
And by this boy—to think what he thinks right?

HÆMON

Nothing that is not right: though I am young
Consider not my years, but how I act.

CREON

Whose business is't but mine how Thebes is governed?

HÆMON

A city is none, that to one man belongs.

CREON

Is it not held, the city is the king's?

HÆMON

Finely thou'dst rule, alone, a land dispeopled!

CREON

O hateful spirit, ruled by a woman's will!

HÆMON

To no base service wilt thou prove me bound.

CREON

Art thou not pleading all the time for her?

HÆMON

For thee and me, and for the gods below.

CREON

Thou shalt not marry her, this side the grave.

HÆMON

If she must die, she shall: but not alone.

CREON

Art grown so bold, thou dost fly out in threats?

HÆMON

What threats, to argue with a foolish purpose?

CREON

Slave—to thy mistress babble, not to me.

HÆMON

Would'st thou have all the talking for thine own?

CREON

Is't come to this? But, by Olympus yonder,
Know well, thou shalt be sorry for these taunts,

Wherewith thou dost upbraid me. Slaves, what ho!
Bring that abhorrence hither, that she may die,
Now, in her bridegroom's sight, whilst here he stands.

HÆMON

Neither in my sight—imagine no such thing—
Shall she be slain; nor shalt thou from this hour
Look with thine eyes upon my face again:
To friends who love thy madness I commit thee.

(*Exit.*)

CHORUS

Suddenly, sire, in anger he is gone.
Young minds grow desperate, by grief distemper'd.

CREON

More than a man let him conceive and do;
He shall not save these maidens from their doom

CHORUS

Both sisters art thou purposed to destroy?

CREON

Not her whose hands sinned not; thou askest well.

CHORUS

What of the other? how shall she be slain?

CREON

By paths untrodden of men I will conduct her,
And shut her, living, in a vault, rock-hewn,
And there, with food, no more than shall suffice
To avert the guilt of murder from the city.
To Hades, the one god whom she reveres,
She, praying not to die, either shall have
Her asking, or shall learn, albeit too late,
That to revere the dead is fruitless toil.

(*Exit.*)

CHORUS (*Sings.*)

O Love, our conqueror, matchless in might,
Thou prevailest, O Love, thou dividest the prey
In damask cheeks of a maiden
Thy watch through the night is set.
Thou roamest over the sea;
On the hills, in the shepherd's huts, thou art;
Nor of deathless gods, nor of short-lived men,
From thy madness any escapeth.
Unjust, through thee, are the thoughts of the just,
Thou dost bend them, O Love, to thy will, to thy spite.
Unkindly strife thou hast kindled,
This wrangling of son with sire.
The fountains of my tears
I can refrain no more,
Seeing Antigone here to the bridal chamber
Come, to the all-receiving chamber of Death

FOURTH EPISODE

ANTIGONE (*Led to the tomb.*)

Friends and my countrymen, ye see me
Upon the last of all my ways
Set forth, the Sun-god's latest light
Beholding, now and never more:
And me no bridal song hath ever sung,
But Acheron will make of me his bride

CHORUS

Therefore renowned, with praise of men,
To yonder vault o' the dead thou goest,
By no slow-wasting sickness stricken,
Nor doomed to fall with those who win
The wages of the swords they drew,
But, being to thyself a law,
Alone of mortals the dark road
To deathward, living, thou shalt tread

ANTIGONE

O Thebes, my city!
O wealthy men of Thebes!
But *ye* will witness—yes, to you I turn—
O fount Dircæan, and this sacred grove
Of Thebe the fair-charioted,
By what stern law, and how of friends unwept,
To that strange grave I go,
The massy dungeon for my burial heaped.
O luckless wight,
Exiled from earth nor housed below,
Both by the living and the dead disowned!

CHORUS

To furthest brink of boldness thou didst stray,
And stumbling there, at foot of Justice's throne,
Full heavily, my daughter, hast thou fallen:
Yet of thy father's fault belike
This suffering pays the price.

ANTIGONE

Thou hast touched, ev'n there, my bitterest pang of all,
A thrice-told tale, my father's grief—
And all our grievous doom.

CHORUS

Religion prompts the reverent deed:
But power, to whomso power belongs,
Must nowise be transgressed; and thee
A self-willed temper hath o'erthrown.

ANTIGONE

O tomb! O nuptial chamber! O house deep-delved
In earth, safe-guarded ever! To thee I come,
And to my kin in thee, who many an one
Are with Persephone, dead among the dead:
And last of all, most miserably by far,
I thither am going, ere my life's term be done

But a good hope I cherish, that, come there,
My father's love will greet me, yea and thine,
My mother—and thy welcome, brother dear:
Since, when ye died, I with mine own hands laved
And dressed your limbs, and poured upon your graves
Libations; and like service done to thee
Hath brought me, Polynices, now to this.
Yet well I honoured thee, the wise will say:
Yet I transgressed—what ordinance of heaven?
Why to the gods, ill-fated, any more
Should I look up—whom call to succour—since
Impiety my piety is named?
But, if these things are pleasing to the gods,
I'll freely own I suffered for my fault;
If theirs the fault, who doomed me, may to them
No worse befall than they unjustly do!

CHORUS

Stormily still o'er the soul of the maiden
The self-same gusts of passion sweep.

CREON

Therefore, I warn them, ruth for their lingering,
To those who lead her, this shall cause.

ANTIGONE

Short shrift, swift death—ah! woe is me—
This speech portends.

CREON

Lay to thy soul no flattering hope,
That unfulfilled this doom may be.

ANTIGONE

O country of Thebes and my father's city,
And gods my progenitors,
Lo, how they lead me—now, and delay not.
O all ye princes of Thebes, behold me—
Of the race of your kings, me, sole surviving—

What things at the hands of what men I suffer
For the fear of the gods I feared.
Because I feared to cast away the fear of Heaven.
(*Exeunt.*)

FIFTH EPISODE

(*Enter* TEIRESIAS, *the blind seer.*)

TEIRESIAS

Princes of Thebes, we come—one sight for both
Our common road descrying, as behooves
Blind men to find their way by help of others.

CREON

What tidings, old Teiresias, dost thou bring?

TEIRESIAS

Hear then the prophet, and attend his speech.

CREON

Have I aforetime from thy wisdom swerved?

TEIRESIAS

So, clear of shoals, thou pilotest the state.

CREON

The service thou hast rendered I attest.

TEIRESIAS

Once more on razor's edge thy fortunes stand.

CREON

Hearing thy speech, I shudder: tell me more.

TEIRESIAS

My art's prognostications hear and judge.
For in my ancient seat, to watch the birds
In that their general gathering-place, I sat,
And heard an unintelligible noise,
A cry and clangour of birds, confused with rage;

Scared by that sound, burnt-offerings I then
Essayed on blazing altars; but no flame
Leapt from the sacrifice; a clammy ooze
Reeked from the thighs, and 'mid the ashes dripped.
This from this boy I heard, whose eyes beheld
The failing signs of sacrifice obscure:
Others by me are guided, I by him.
And by thy will we are afflicted thus.
For now our hearths and altars every one
Have ravening dogs and birds fouled with the flesh
Of this poor fallen son of Œdipus;
And so no flame of victims burnt may move
Gods any more to hearken to our prayers,
And birds obscene flap forth a bodeful cry,
With fat of human carrion newly gorged.
Slight not, my son, such warning. For all men,
Both great and small, are liable to err:
But he who errs no more unfortunate
Or all unwise shall be, if having tripped
He rights the wrong nor stubbornly persists.
He who persists in folly is the fool.
Give death his due: stab not the fallen foe:
What valour is in this, to slay the slain?
Wisely I speak and well; and sweet it is
To hear good counsel, when it counsels gain.

CREON

Old man, ye all, as bowmen at a mark
Shoot at this man, and with your prophecies
Ye practice on me too, and mine own kin
Mere merchandise and salework make of me.
Go to, but him, I say, ye shall not bury:
No, not if eagles, ministers of Zeus,
Should bear him piecemeal to their Master's throne,
Will I, for fear of such pollution, grant
Leave for his burial,[1] knowing well that men
Soil not the stainless majesty of heaven.

[1] The king, whose mind is as changeful as it is violent, instantly realizes the impiety of this utterance, and half retracts it.

But, aged seer, the wisest of mankind
Dishonourably may fall, who fairly speak
Dishonourable words, and all for gain.

CREON

Unlock them, only speaking not for gain.

TEIRESIAS

So, for thy part indeed, methinks I shall.

CREON

Think not that in my purpose thou shalt trade.

TEIRESIAS

But surely know that thou not many more
Revolving courses of the sun shalt pass,
Ere to thine own blood one, to make amends,
Dead for the dead, thou shalt have rendered up,
For that a living soul thou hast sent below,
And with dishonour in the grave hast lodged,
And that one dead thou holdest here cut off
From presence of the gods who reign below,
All rites of death, all obsequies denied—
With whom thou shouldst not meddle, nor the gods
In heaven, but of their due thou robb'st the dead.
Therefore The Avengers of Hades and the gods wait
For thee with ruin slow yet sure,
To take thee in the pit which thou hast dug.
Do I speak this for gold? Thyself shalt judge:
For, yet a little while, and wailings loud
Of men and women in thy house shall show.
So like a bowman have I launched at thee
In wrath,—for thou provok'st me,—shafts indeed
To pierce thy heart, and fail not, from whose smart
Thou'lt not escape. But now, boy, lead me home,
That he may vent his spleen on younger men,
And learn to keep a tongue more temperate,
And in his breast a better mind than now.

(*Exit.*)

CHORUS

The man has prophesied dread things, O king,
And gone: and never have I known—not since
These temples changed their raven locks to snow—
That aught of false this city heard from him.

CREON

Yea, this I know, and much am I perplexed:
For hard it is to yield, but standing firm
I fear to pluck swift ruin on my pride.

CHORUS

Son of Menœceus, be advised in time.

CREON

Say then, what must I do? and I'll obey.

CHORUS

Go, from her prison in the rock release
The maiden, and the unburied corpse inter.

CREON

Dost thou think this, and wouldst thou have me yield?

CHORUS

Yea, king, and quickly; for the gods cut short
With sudden scathe the foolishness of men.

CREON

Hardly indeed, but yet with forced consent
I'll do it, stooping to necessity.

CHORUS

Do it, and go; leave not this task to others.

CREON

Even as I am, I'll go; and, servants, haste,
That hear and hear me not; axes in hand,
All to yon spot, far-seen, make good your speed.

But I, since this way now my mind is bent,
Whom I myself have bound, myself will loose.
For now my heart misgives me, he lives best,
Whose feet depart not from the ancient ways.

(*Exit.*)[1]

Convinced that the danger is now averted, the chorus sing a confident hymn of supplication to Bacchus, the especial local divinity of Thebes. During this song several hours must be supposed to elapse.

EXODUS

MESSENGER (*Entering.*)

Neighbors of Cadmus,[2] and the royal house
Of old Amphion,[2] no man's life would I,
How high or low soever, praise or blame,
Since, who to-day has fortune, good or ill,
To-morrow's fortune lifts or lays him low;
For Creon before was happy, as I deemed;
Now all is lost. For when the joys of life
Men have relinquished, no more life indeed.

CHORUS

Of what grief now of princes wilt thou tell?

MESSENGER

Hæmon is dead: his death no stranger's act.

CHORUS

Slain by himself, or by his father's hand?

MESSENGER

Wroth with his pitiless sire, he slew himself.

[1] The King sets forth; but, perverse to the last, he waits to see the dead buried, and lets slip the time when the living might yet have been rescued.

[2] Ancient kings and founders of Thebes.

CHORUS

Lo, hard at hand the miserable queen,
Eurydice: who from the house comes forth
Either by chance, or hearing of her son.

EURYDICE (*From the palace.*)

Good townsmen, all, your conference I heard,
As to the doors I came, intending now
Of Pallas to entreat her heavenly aid.
But tell me now your tidings once again—
For, not unlearned in sorrow, I shall hear.

MESSENGER

Dear mistress, I will tell thee what I saw,
And not leave out one word of all the truth.
Thy husband hence I followed at the heels
To that high plain, where torn by dogs the body
Of Polynices lay, unpitied still.
A prayer we said to Hecate[1] in the way
And Pluto, their displeasure to refrain,
Then, sprinkling with pure water, in new-stript boughs
Wrapped round and burned the fragments that remained.
A lofty funeral-mound of native earth
We heaped for him; then sought the maiden's bed,
Her bridal bed with Hades in the rock.
And from afar a voice of shrill lament
About the unhallowed chamber some one heard,
And came to Creon, and told it to his lord.
And in his ears, approaching, the wild cry
Rang doubtfully, till now there brake from him
A word of sharp despair, "O wretched man,
What fear is at my heart? and am I going
The wofullest road that ever I have gone?
It is my son's voice greets me. Good servants, go,
Go nearer quickly; and standing by the tomb,
Even to the throat of the vault peer through and look,
Where the wrenched stonework gapes, if Hæmon's voice

[1] Goddess of roads and crossways, injured by the neglect of the corpse.

I recognize indeed, or by the gods
Am cheated!'' Crazed with his fear, he spake; and we
Looked as he bade; and in the last of the tomb
We saw the maiden—hanged: about her neck
Some shred of linen had served her for a noose:
And fallen upon her, clasping her, he lay,
Wailing his wasted passion in the grave,
His fatal father, and his luckless bride.
His father saw, and crying a bitter cry
Went in, and with a lamentable voice
Called him, ''O rash, what is it that thou hast done?
What wouldst thou? On what madness hast thou rushed?
My son, come forth: I pray thee—I implore.''
But with fierce eyes the boy glared at his sire
And looks of loathing, and for answer plucked
Forth a two-hilted sword, and would have struck,
But missed him, as he fled: and in that minute,
Wroth with himself, in his own side amain
Thrust deep the steel, unhappy; and conscious still
Folded the maiden in his fainting arms;
Then, gasping out his life in one sharp breath,
Pelted her pale cheek with the crimson shower.
Dead with the dead he lies, such nuptial rites
In halls of Hades, luckless, having won.

CHORUS

How should one deem of this. The queen, without
A word, of good or evil, has gone hence.

MESSENGER

Indeed, 'tis strange; but yet I feed on hope
That to lament in public for her son
She will not deign; but, as for private sorrow,
Will charge her women in the house to weep.
She is well tried in prudence, not to fail.

CHORUS

I know not; but to me the too-much silence,
No less than clamorous grief, seems perilous.

MESSENGER

I will go hence to the house, and know, if aught
Of secret purpose in her raging heart
She hath kept locked from us. Thou sayest well:
The too-much silence may bode mischief too.

CHORUS

Lo, the king comes hither himself, in his hands
The record, not doubtful its purport, bearing;
No grief (I dare say) wrought by another,
But the weight of his own misdoing.

CREON

Alas, my purblind wisdom's fatal fault,
Stubborn, and fraught with death!
Ye see us, sire and son,
The slayer and the slain.
O counsels all unblest!
Alas for thee, my son,
So young a life and so untimely quenched—
Gone from me, past recall—
Not by thy folly, but my own!

CHORUS

Ah, how too late thou dost discern the truth!

CREON

Yea, to my cost I know: but then, methinks,
Oh, then some god with crushing weight
Leapt on me, drave me into frantic ways,
Trampling, alas for me,
In the base dust my ruined joy.
O toil and trouble of mortals—trouble and toil!

SECOND MESSENGER

Trouble, O king, thine own and none but thine,
Thou comest, methinks, part bearing in thy hands;
Part—in the house thou hast, and soon shalt see.

CREON

What more, what worse than evil, yet remains?

SECOND MESSENGER

Thy wife is dead, with desperate hand ev'n now
Self-slain, for this dead son for whom she lived.

CREON

O harbour of Hades, never to be appeased,
Why art thou merciless?
What heavy news is this?
Harsh news to me of grief,
That slays me, slain before!
A woful word indeed,
Telling of slaughter upon slaughter heaped,
To me, the twice-bereaved,
At one fell swoop, of son and wife!

CREON

Oh lead me hence, unprofitable; who thee
Unwittingly have slain,
Child, and my wife, unhappy; and know not now
Which way to look to either: for all things
Are crooked that I handle, and a fate
Intolerable upon my life hath leapt.

CHORUS

First of all happiness far is wisdom,
And to the gods that one fail not of piety.
But great words of the overweening
Lay great stripes to the backs of the boasters:
Taught by adversity,
Old age learns, too late, to be wise.

Perhaps the poet felt this last scene necessary, in order that he, or the just gods, may side unmistakably with Antigone, overwhelming Creon in a doom far worse than hers. Her utter loneliness, the absence of assurance,

uttered to her by any one, that her deed is and will be fully appreciated, gives a certain austerity to the whole drama. Either Æschylus or Euripides would have introduced some divine character to justify her most completely. But few readers will regret even the loneliness that sets, as it were, upon an even loftier pedestal the generous heroism of this all but faultless maid. Neither ancient nor modern poet has delineated a nobler nature.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The version here used for the "Antigone" is Whitelaw's, which is warmly praised by Jebb. Campbell and Plumptre have also rendered the seven plays. Professor Jebb's masterly prose translation appeared, originally, facing the Greek text, in his exhaustive edition of Sophocles in seven luxurious volumes. Those volumes also contain the best introductions, and literary criticism generally, that the works of Sophocles have ever received. This translation has just been made accessible, in a single volume (published by Macmillan), to those who are not students of Greek.

CHAPTER VIII

EURIPIDES AND THE ALCESTIS

The Glory of Self-Sacrifice.

Euripides is in many ways the most modern of all Greeks. The pathos of common life, the heroism shown especially by those in humble station, often accorded ill with the stately robes, the mask and buskin, of the traditional drama. While Æschylus feels the resistless sweep of righteous law divine, and Sophocles at least trusts that man, master of his own soul, may learn wisdom through suffering, Euripides is hopelessly perplexed by the contradictions of life. If gods there be, he seems to say, they must be quarrelsome, their rule chaotic. He has even been seriously accused, in our own day, of an effort to undermine all belief in the very Olympic divinities whom he is so fond of using for spectacular effect, or to cut the knot of the tragic plot.

His happiest play, which is also the popular favorite, is the oldest one of his preserved, having been performed in 438 B.C., before the terrible war with Sparta began to sadden all hearts. It is, furthermore, the afterpiece:—the fourth in the group of dramas written by the poet to be performed together. Hence, though by no means comic as a whole, it contains many lighter touches, and a happy finale.

The scene is before the palace of King Admetus, whose wife has consented to die this day in his stead.

On this same morning divine Apollo's year of exile and servitude, as Admetus' herdsman, ends. An attentive reading of the play will clear up nearly all obscurities.

ALCESTIS

(*Enter* APOLLO, *from the palace.*)

APOLLO

Halls of Admetus, where I stooped my pride
To brook the fare of serfs, yea I, a God;—
The fault was fault of Zeus: he slew my son
Asklepius—hurled the levin through his heart.
Wroth for the dead, his smiths of heavenly fire
I slew, the Cyclopes; and, for blood-atonement,
Serf to a mortal man my father made me.
To this land came I, tended mine host's kine,
And warded still his house unto this day.
Righteous myself, I lighted on the righteous,
The son of Pheres: him I snatched from death,
Cozening the Fates: to me the Sisters[1] pledged them
That imminent death Admetus should escape
If he for ransom gave another life.
To all he went—all near and dear,—and asked
Grey sire, the mother that had given him life;
But, save his wife, found none that would consent
For him to die and never more see light.
Now in his arms upborne within yon home
She gaspeth forth her life: for on this day
Her weird[2] it is to die and part from life.
I, lest pollution taint me in their house,
Go forth to yonder hall's beloved roof.

[1] The three fates.
[2] Fortune, fate.

(*Enter* DEATH.)

Lo, yonder Death!—I see him nigh at hand,
Priest of the dead, who comes to hale her down
To Hades' halls—well hath he kept his time,
Watching this day, whereon she needs must die.

DEATH

Ha, thou at the palace!—Wilt not make room,
Phœbus?—thou wrestest the right yet again.
Thou removest the landmarks of Gods of Gloom.
And thou makest their honours vain.
Did this not suffice thee, to thwart that doom
Of Admetus, when all by thy cunning beguiled
Were the Fates, that thou now must be warding the wife
With thine hand made ready the bowstring to strain,
Though she pledged her from death to redeem with her life
Her lord—she, Pelias' child?

APOLLO

Fear not: fair words and justice are with me.

DEATH

Justice with thee!—what needeth then the bow?

APOLLO

This?—'tis my wont to bear it evermore.

DEATH

Yea, and to aid yon house in lawless wise.

APOLLO

Mine heart is heavy for my friend's mischance.

DEATH

What, wilt thou wrest from me this second corpse?

APOLLO

Nay, not that other did I take by force.

DEATH

Not?—why on earth then?—why not underground?

APOLLO

She was his ransom, she for whom thou camest.

DEATH

Yea, and will hale her deep beneath the earth.

APOLLO

So then thou wilt not grant this grace to me?

DEATH

Nay surely—dost not know my wonted way?

APOLLO

Surely thou shalt forbear, though ruthless thou,
So mighty a man[1] to Pheres' hall shall come.
By force yon woman shall he wrest from thee.
Yea, thou of me shalt have no thank for this,
And yet shalt do it, and shalt have mine hate.

(*Exit* APOLLO.)

DEATH

Talk on, talk on: no profit shalt thou win.
This woman down to Hades' halls shall pass.
For her I go: my sword shall seal her ours·
For sacred to the Nether Gods is he,
He from whose head this sword hath shorn the hair.

(*Exit* DEATH.)

(*Enter* CHORUS, *dividing to right and left, so that the sections answer one another till they unite.*)

HALF-CHORUS 1

What meaneth this hush afront of the hall?
The home of Admetus, why voiceless all?

[1] Heracles.

HALF-CHORUS 2

No friend of the house who should speak of its plight
Is nigh, who should bid that we raise the keen[1]
For the dead, or should tell us that yet on the light
Alcestis looketh, and liveth the Queen,
The daughter of Pelias, the noblest, I ween,
Yea, in all men's sight
The noblest of women on earth that have been.

HALF-CHORUS 1

Or hearest thou mourning or sighing
Or beating of hands,
Or the wail of bereaved ones outcrying?
No handmaid stands
At the palace-gate.
O Healer, appear for the dying, appear as a bright bird flying
Twixt the surges of fate!

HALF-CHORUS 2

Ah, they would not be hushed, had the life of her flown!

HALF-CHORUS 1

Not forth of the doors is the death-train gone

(*Enter* HANDMAID.)

But hither cometh of the handmaids one,
Weeping the while. What tidings shall I hear?
—To grieve at all mischance unto thy lords
May be forgiven; but if thy lady lives
Or even now hath passed, fain would we know.

HANDMAID

She liveth, and is dead: both may'st thou say

CHORUS

Ay so?—how should the same be dead and live?

[1] Dirge, lamentation.

HANDMAID

Even now she droopeth, gasping out her life.

CHORUS

Are all things meet, then, being done for her?

HANDMAID

Yea, ready is her burial-attire.

CHORUS

Let her be sure that glorious she dies
And noblest woman 'neath the sun's wide way.

HANDMAID

Noblest?—how not?—what tongue will dare gainsay?
What must the woman be who passeth her?
How could a wife give honour to her lord
More than by yielding her to die for him?
And this—yea, all the city knoweth this.
But what within she did, hear thou, and marvel.
For when she knew that the appointed day
Was come, in river-water her white skin
She bathed, and from the cedar-chest took forth
Vesture and jewels, and decked her gloriously,
And stood before the hearth, and prayed, and said:[1]
"Queen, for I pass beneath the earth, I fall
Before thee now, and nevermore, and pray:—
Be mother to my orphans: mate with him
A loving wife, with her a noble husband.
Nor, as their mother dieth, so may they,
My children, die untimely, but with weal
In the home-land fill up a life of bliss."
To all the altars through Admetus' halls
She went; with wreaths she hung them, and she prayed,
Plucking the while the tresses of the myrtle,
Tearless, unsighing, and the imminent fate
Changed not the lovely rose-tint of her cheek.
Then to her bower she rushed, fell on the bed;

[1] The prayer is to Hestia or Vesta, the goddess of the hearthside.

And there, O there she wept, and thus she speaks:
"O couch, whereon I loosed the maiden zone
For this man, for whose sake I die to-day,
Farewell: I hate thee not. Me hast thou lost,
Me only: loth to fail thee and my lord
I die: but thee another bride shall own,
Not more true-hearted; happier perchance."
Then falls thereon, and kisses: all the bed
Is watered with the flood of melting eyes.
But having wept her fill of many tears,
Drooping she goeth, reeling from the couch;
Yet oft, as forth the bower she passed, returned,
And flung herself again upon the couch.
And the babes, clinging to their mother's robes,
Were weeping; and she clasped them in her arms,
Fondling now this, now that, as one death-doomed.
And all the servants 'neath the roof were weeping,
Pitying their lady. But to each she stretched
Her right hand forth; and none there was so mean
To whom she spake not and received reply.
Such are the ills Admetus' home within.

CHORUS

Doth not Admetus groan for this affliction
Of such a noble wife to be bereft?

HANDMAID

Ay, weeps, and clasps his dear one in his arms,
And prays, "Forsake me not!"—asking the while
The impossible, for still she wanes and wastes,
Drooping her hand, a misery-burdened weight.
But yet, albeit hardly breathing now,
To the sun's rays fain would she lift her eyes.
But I will go and make thy presence known:
For 'tis not all that love so well their kings
As to stand by them, in afflictions loyal.

(Several smaller sections of the chorus probably chanted the next passages in succession.)

CHORUS 1

O Zeus, for our lords is there nought but despair?
No path through the tangle of evils, no loosing of chains that have bound them?

CHORUS 2

No tidings?—remaineth but rending of hair,
And the stricken ones turned to the tomb with the garments of sorrow around them?

CHORUS 3

Even so—even so! yet uplift we in prayer
Our hands to the Gods, for that power from the days everlasting hath crowned them.

CHORUS 4

O Healer-king,
Find thou for Admetus the balm of relief, for the captive deliverance!

(*Enter female Attendants bearing* ALCESTIS, *accompanied by* ADMETUS *and Children.*)

ALCESTIS (*Sings.*)

O Sun, and the day's dear light,
And ye clouds through the wheeling heaven in the race everlasting flying!

ADMETUS

He seeth thee and me, two stricken ones,
Which wrought the Gods no wrong, that thou shouldst die.

ALCESTIS (*Sings.*)

O Land, O stately height
Of mine halls, and my bridal couch in Iolkos my fatherland lying!

ADMETUS

Uplift thee, hapless love, forsake me not,
And pray the mighty Gods in ruth to turn.

ALCESTIS (*Sings.*)

I see the Boat with the oars twin-sweeping,
And, his hand on the pole as in haste aye keeping,
Charon the Ferryman calleth, "What ho, wilt thou linger and linger?
Hasten,—'tis thou dost delay me!" he crieth with beckoning finger

ADMETUS

Ah me! a bitter ferrying this thou namest!
O evil-starred, what woes endure we now!

ALCESTIS (*Sings.*)

One haleth me—haleth me hence to the mansion
Of the dead!—dost thou mark not the darkling expansion
Of the pinions of Hades, the blaze of his eyes 'neath their caverns out-glaring?
What wouldst thou?—Unhand me!—In anguish and pain by what path am I faring!

ADMETUS

Woeful to them that love thee: most to me
And to thy babes, sad sharers in this grief.

ALCESTIS

Admetus,—for thou seest all my plight,—
Fain would I speak mine heart's wish ere I die.
I, honouring thee, and setting thee in place
Before mine own soul still to see this light,
Am dying, unconstrained to die for thee.
I might have wed what man Thessalian
I would, have dwelt wealth-crowned in princely halls;
Yet would not live on, torn away from thee,
With orphaned children: wherefore spared I not
The gifts of youth still mine, wherein I joyed.
Yet she that bare, he that begat, forsook thee,
Though fair for death their time of life was come,
Yea, fair, to save their son and die renowned.
Let be:—remember thou what thank is due

For this: I never can ask full requital;—
For nought there is more precious than the life;—
Yet justly due: for these thy babes thou lovest
No less than I, if that thine heart be right.
Suffer that they have lordship in mine home:
Wed not a stepdame to supplant our babes,
Whose jealous hand shall smite them, thine and mine.
Do not, ah, do not this—I pray thee, I.
The boy—his father is his tower of strength
But, O my child, what girlhood will be thine?
To thee what would she be, thy father's yoke-mate?
What if with ill report she smirched thy name,
And in thy youth's flower marred thy marriage-hopes?
For thee thy mother ne'er shall deck for bridal,
Nor hearten thee in travail, O my child,
There, where nought gentler than the mother is.
For I must die, nor shall it be to morn,
Nor on the third day comes on me this bane:
Straightway of them that are not shall I be.
Farewell, be happy. Now for thee, my lord,
Abides the boast to have won the noblest wife,
For you, my babes, to have sprung from noblest mother.

CHORUS

Fear not; for I am bold to speak for him
This will he do, an if he be not mad.

ADMETUS

It shall, it shall be, dread not thou: for thee
Living I had; and dead, mine only wife
Shalt thou be called: nor ever in thy stead
Shall bride Thessalian hail me as her lord.
Children enough have I: I pray the Gods
For joy in these—our joy in thee is nought.
Not for a year's space will I mourn for thee,
But long as this my life shall last, dear wife,
Revels shall cease, and gatherings at the wine,
Garlands, and song, which wont to fill mine house.

And, wrought by craftsmen's cunning hands, thy form
Imaged, upon a couch outstretched shall lie,
Falling whereon, and clasping with mine hands,
Calling thy name, in fancy shall mine arms
Hold my beloved, though I hold her not:—
A chill delight, I wot: yet shall I lift
The burden from my soul. In dreams shalt thou
Haunt me and gladden: sweet to see the loved,
Though but a fleeting presence night-revealed.
But, were the tongue and strain of Orpheus mine,
To witch Demeter's Daughter and her lord,[1]
And out of Hades by my song to win thee,
I had fared down: nor Pluto's Hound had stayed me,
Nor Spirit-wafter Charon at the oar,
Or ever I restored thy life to light.
Yet there look thou for me, whenso I die;
Prepare a home, as who shall dwell with me.
For in the selfsame cedar chest, wherein
Thou liest, will I bid them lay my bones
Outstretched beside thee: ne'er may I be severed,
No, not in death, from thee, my one true friend.

ALCESTIS

On these terms take the children from mine hand.

ADMETUS

I take them—precious gift from precious hand.

ALCESTIS

Be to these babes a mother in my stead.

ADMETUS

Sore is their need, who are bereft of thee.

ALCESTIS

Dark—dark—mine eyes are drooping, heavy-laden.

[1] Persephone, daughter of Demeter, is wedded to Pluto, king of Hades, the world of the dead. Orpheus by his music softened Pluto's heart so that the singer was allowed to lead back to the light his dead wife.

ADMETUS

Uplift thy face: forsake not thine own children!

ALCESTIS

Sore loth do I—yet O farewell, my babes!

ADMETUS

Look unto them—O look!

ALCESTIS

I am no more.

ADMETUS

Ah, leav'st thou us?

ALCESTIS

Farewell. (*Dies.*)

ADMETUS

O wretch undone!

CHORUS

Gone,—gone!—No more is this Admetus' wife!

EUMELUS (*Sings.*)

Woe for my lot!—to the tomb hath my mother descended,
descended!
Never again, O my father, she seeth the light of the sun!
In anguish she leaves us forsaken: the story is ended, is
ended,
Of her sheltering love, and the tale of the motherless life
is begun.
Look—look on her eyelids, her hands drooping nerve-
less! O hear me, O hear me!
It is I—I beseech thee, my mother!—thine own little,
own little bird!
It is I—O, I cast me upon thee—thy lips are so near me,
so near me,
Unto mine am I pressing them, mother!—I plead for a
word—but a word!

ADMETUS

With her who heareth not, nor seeth: ye
And I are stricken with a heavy doom.

EUMELUS (*Sings.*)

And I am but a little one, father—so young, and forsaken, forsaken,
Forlorn of my mother—O hapless! a weariful lot shall be mine!
And thou, little maiden, my sister, the burden hast taken, hast taken,
Which thy brother may bear not alone, and a weariful lot shall be thine.

CHORUS

Admetus, this mischance thou needs must bear.
Not first of mortals thou, nor shalt be last
To lose a noble wife; and, be thou sure,
From us, from all, this debt is due—to die.

ADMETUS

I know it: nowise unforeseen this ill
Hath swooped upon me: long I grieved to know it.
But—for to burial must I bear my dead—
Stay ye, and, tarrying, echo back my wail
To that dark God whom no drink-offerings move.
And all Thessalians over whom I rule
I bid take part in mourning for this woman,
With shaven head and sable-shrouding robe.
And ye which yoke the cars four-horsed, or steeds
Of single frontlet, shear with steel their manes.
Music of flutes the city through, or lyres,
Be none, while twelve moons round their circles out:
For dearer dead, nor kinder unto me
I shall not bury: worthy of mine honour
Is she, for she alone hath died for me. (*Exit.*)

CHORUS

O Pelias' daughter, I hail thee:
I waft thee eternal farewell
To thine home where the darkness must veil thee,
Where in Hades unsunned thou shalt dwell.
Know, Dark-haired, thy grey Spirit-wafter
Hath sped not with twy[1]-plashing oar
Woman nobler, nor shall speed hereafter
To Acheron's shore.

HERACLES (*Entering.*)

Strangers, who dwell in this Pheraian land,
Say, do I find Admetus in his home?

CHORUS

Heracles, in his home is Pheres' son.
Yet say, what brings thee to Thessalian land,
That thou shouldst come to this Pheraian town?

HERACLES

For Thracian Diomedes' four-horsed chariot.

CHORUS

Not save by battle may those steeds be won.

HERACLES

Not this the first time I have run such course.

CHORUS

What profit is it if thou slay their lord?

HERACLES

Those steeds shall I drive back to Tiryns' king.[2]

CHORUS

Yea, but with ravening jaws do they rend men.

[1] Two.

[2] Eurystheus, whom Heracles is bound to serve.

HERACLES

Go to—thus banquet mountain-beasts, not horses.

CHORUS

Nay, thou shalt see their cribs with gore bespattered.

HERACLES

Whom boasteth he for father, he that reared them?

CHORUS

Ares,[1] the king of Thracia's golden shield.

HERACLES

Thou say'st: such toil my fate imposeth still,
Harsh evermore, uphillward straining aye,
But never man shall see Alkmene's child
Quailing before the hand of any foe.

CHORUS

Lo, there himself, the ruler of the land,
Admetus, cometh forth his palace-hall.

(*Enter* ADMETUS.)

ADMETUS

Hail, O thou sprung from Zeus' and Perseus' blood!

HERACLES

Admetus, hail thou too, Thessalia's king.

ADMETUS

Hale?—Would I were! Yet thy good heart I know.

HERACLES

Wherefore for mourning shaven show'st thou thus?

ADMETUS

This day must I commit to earth a corpse.

[1] Ares, the wargod, is the especial patron of savage Thrace.

HERACLES
Now heaven forefend thou mourn'st for children dead!

ADMETUS
In mine home live the babes whom I begat.

HERACLES
Sooth, death-ripe were thy sire, if he be gone.

ADMETUS
He liveth, and my mother, Heracles.

HERACLES
Surely, O surely, not thy wife, Admetus?

ADMETUS
Twofold must be mine answer touching her.

HERACLES
Or hath she died, say'st thou, or liveth yet?

ADMETUS
She is, and she is not: here lies my sorrow.

HERACLES
Nothing the more I know: dark sayings thine.

ADMETUS
Know'st not the doom whereon she needs must light?

HERACLES
I know she pledged herself to die for thee.

ADMETUS
How lives she then, if she to this consented?

HERACLES
Mourn not thy wife ere dead: abide the hour.

ADMETUS

Dead is the doomed, and no more is the dead.

HERACLES

—But now, why weep'st thou? What dear friend is dead?

ADMETUS

A woman—hers the memory we mourn.

HERACLES

Some stranger born, or nigh of kin to thee?

ADMETUS

A stranger born; yet near and dear to us.

HERACLES

Would we had found thee mourning not, Admetus.

ADMETUS

Ay so?—what purpose lurketh 'neath thy word?

HERACLES

On will I to another host's hearth-welcome.

ADMETUS

It cannot be: may no such evil come!

HERACLES

A burden unto mourners comes the guest.

ADMETUS

Aloof the guest-bowers are where we will lodge thee.

HERACLES

Let me pass on, and have my thanks unmeasured.

ADMETUS

Unto another's hearth thou canst not go.

(*To an attendant.*)

Ho thou, lead on: open the guest-bowers looking
Away from these our chambers. Tell my stewards
To set on meat in plenty. Shut withal
The mid-court doors: it fits not that the guests,
The while they feast, hear wailings, and be vexed.
(*Exit* HERACLES.)

CHORUS

What dost thou?—such affliction at the door,
And guests for thee, Admetus? Art thou mad?

ADMETUS

But had I driven him from my home and city
Who came my guest, then hadst thou praised me more?
Yea, and myself have proved him kindliest host
Whene'er to Argos' thirsty plain I fared.

CHORUS

Why hide then the dread Presence in the house,
When came a friend?—Thyself hast named him friend.

ADMETUS

Never had he been won to pass my doors,
Had he one whit of mine afflictions known.

CHORUS (*Sings.*)

Halls thronged of the guests ever welcome, O dwelling
Of a hero, for ever the home of the free,
The Lord of the lyre-strings sweet beyond telling,
Apollo, hath deigned to sojourn in thee.
Amid thine habitations, a shepherd of sheep,
The flocks of Admetus he scorned not to keep,
While the shepherd's bridal-strains, soft-swelling
From his pipe, pealed over the slant-sloped lea.

ADMETUS

O kindly presence of Pheraian men,
This corpse even now, with all things meet, my servants
Bear on their shoulders to the tomb and pyre.
Wherefore, as custom is, hail ye the dead,
On the last journey as she goeth forth.

CHORUS

Lo, I behold thy sire with aged foot
Advancing, and attendants in their hands
Bear ornaments to deck the dead withal.

(*Enter* PHERES *with Attendants bearing gifts.*)

PHERES

I come in thine afflictions sorrowing, son:
A noble wife and virtuous hast thou lost,
None will gainsay: yet these calamities
We needs must bear, how hard to bear soever.
Receive these ornaments, and let her pass
Beneath the earth: well may the corpse be honoured
Of her who for thy life's sake died, my son;
O saviour of my son, who us upraisedst
In act to fall, all hail! May bliss be thine
Even in Hades. Thus to wed, I say,
Profiteth men—or nothing worth is marriage

ADMETUS

Bidden of me thou com'st not to this burial,
Nor count I thine the presence of a friend.
Thine ornaments she never shall put on;
True father of my body thou wast not;
Nor she that said she bare me, and was called
My mother, gave me birth: of bondman blood
To thy wife's breast was I brought privily.
So old, and standing on the verge of life,
Yet hadst no will, yet hadst no heart to die
For thine own son!—Ye suffered her, a woman

Not of our house, whom I with righteous cause
Might count alone my mother and my father.
Yet here was honour, hadst thou dared the strife,
In dying for thy son. A paltry space
To cling to life in any wise was left.
Then had I lived, and she, through days to come,
Nor I, left lorn, should thus mine ills bemoan.
Yet all that may the fortunate betide
Fell to thy lot; in manhood's prime a king:
Me hadst thou son and heir unto thine house
So that thou wast not, dying, like to leave
A childless home for stranger folk to spoil.
Not I with this mine hand will bury thee.
For thee dead am I. If I see the light,—
Another saviour found,—I call me son
To her, and loving fosterer of her age.
For nought the aged pray for death's release,
Plaining of age and weary-wearing time.
Let death draw near—who then would die? Not one:
No more is eld a burden unto them.

CHORUS

O hush! Suffice the affliction at the doors.
O son, infuriate not thy father's soul.

PHERES

This insolence passeth!—hurling malapert words
On me, not lightly thus shalt thou come off!
Thee I begat and nurtured, of mine house
The heir: no debt is mine to die for thee.
Not from our sires such custom we received
That sires for sons should die: no Greek law this.
What is my wrong, my robbery of thee?
For me die thou not, I die not for thee.
Thou joy'st to see light—shall thy father joy not?
Sooth, I account our time beneath the earth
Long, and our life-space short, yet is it sweet.
Shamelessly hast thou fought against thy death:

Thy life is but transgression of thy doom
And murder of thy wife:—*my* cowardice!
Cunning device hast thou devised to die
Never, cajoling still wife after wife
To die for thee!—and dost revile thy friends
Who will not so—and thou the coward, thou?
Peace! e'en bethink thee, if thou lov'st thy life,
So all love theirs. Thou, if thou speakest evil
Of us, shalt hear much evil, and that true.

CHORUS

Ye have said too much, thou now, and he before.
Refrain, old sire, from railing on thy son.

ADMETUS

Say on, say on; I have said: if hearing truth
Gall thee, thou shouldest not have done me wrong.

PHERES

One life to live, not twain—this is our due.

ADMETUS

Have thy desire—one life outlasting Zeus.

PHERES

Dost curse thy parents, who hast had no wrong?

ADMETUS

Ay, whom I marked love-sick for dateless life.

PHERES

What?—art not burying her in thine own stead?

ADMETUS

This taunt strikes thee—'tis thou wast loth to die.

PHERES

Sweet is yon sun-god's light, yea, it is sweet.

ADMETUS

Yet shalt thou die in ill fame, when thou diest

PHERES

Nought reck I of ill-speaking o'er my grave

ADMETUS

Ah me! how full of shamelessness is eld!

PHERES

Not shameless she,—but senseless hast thou found her

ADMETUS

Begone: leave me to bury this my dead.

PHERES

I go: her murderer will bury her.
Thou shalt yet answer for it to her kin.
Surely Akastus is no more a man,
If he of thee claim not his sister's blood.

(*Exit* PHERES.)

ADMETUS

Childless grow old, as ye deserve, while lives
Your child: ye shall not come beneath one roof
With me. If need were to renounce by heralds
Thy fatherhood, I had renounced it now.
Let us—for we must bear the present ill—
Pass on, to lay our dead upon the pyre.

CHORUS

Alas for the loving and daring!
Farewell to the noblest and best!
May Hermes conduct thee down-faring
Kindly, and Hades to rest
Receive thee! If any atonement
For ills even there may betide
To the good, O thine be enthronement
By Hades' bride!

(*Exeunt omnes in funeral procession.*)

(*Enter* SERVANT.)

SERVANT

Full many a guest, from many a land which came
Unto Admetus' dwelling, have I known,
Have set before them meat: but never guest
More pestilent received I to this hearth:
Who first, albeit he saw my master mourning,
Entered, and passed the threshold unashamed;
Then, nowise courteously received the fare
Found with us, though our woeful plight he knew,
But, what we brought not, hectoring bade us bring.
The ivy cup uplifts he in his hands,
Dissonant-howling. Diverse strains were heard:
For he sang on, regardless all of ills
Darkening Admetus' house; we servants wept
Our mistress: yet we showed not to the guest
Eyes tear-bedewed, for so Admetus bade.
She from the house hath passed: I followed not,
Nor stretched the hand, nor wailed unto my mistress
Farewell, who was to me and all the household
A mother, for from ills untold she saved us,
Assuaging her lord's wrath. Do I not well
To loathe this guest, intruder on our griefs?

(*Enter* HERACLES.)

HERACLES

Ho, fellow, why this solemn brooding look?
Thou, seeing here in presence thy lord's friend,
With visage sour and cloud of knitted brows
Receiv'st him, fretting o'er an alien grief.
Hither to me, that wiser thou may'st grow.
The lot of man—its nature knowest thou?
I trow not: how shouldst thou? Give ear to me.
From all mankind the debt of death is due,
Nor of all mortals is there one that knows
If through the coming morrow he shall live:
This hearing then, and learning it from me,

Make merry, drink; the life from day to day
Account thine own, all else in fortune's power.
Pass through yon doors and quaff the wine with me,
Thy brows with garlands bound.
What, man!—the mortal must be mortal-minded.
So, for your solemn wights of knitted brows,
For each and all,—if thou for judge wilt take me,—
Life is not truly life, but mere affliction.

SERVANT

All this we know: but now are we in plight
Not meet for laughter and for revelry.

HERACLES

The woman dead is alien-born: grieve not
Exceeding much. Yet live the household's lords.

SERVANT

Live, quotha!—know'st thou not the house's ills?

HERACLES

Yea, if thy master lied not unto me.

SERVANT

Go thou in peace: our lord's ills are for us.

HERACLES

Grief for a stranger such talk heralds not.

SERVANT

Else had I not sore vexed beheld thy revelling.

HERACLES

How! have I sorry handling of mine hosts?

SERVANT

Thou cam'st in hour unmeet for welcoming,
For grief is on us; and thou see'st shorn hair
And vesture of black robes.

HERACLES

But who hath died?
Not of the children one, or grey-haired sire?

SERVANT

Nay, but Admetus' wife is dead, O guest.

HERACLES

How say'st thou?—Ha, even then ye gave me welcome?

SERVANT

For shame he could not thrust thee from these doors.

HERACLES

I felt it, when I saw his tear-drowned eyes,
His shaven hair, and face: yet he prevailed,
Saying he bare a stranger-friend to burial.
I passed this threshold in mine heart's despite,
And drank in halls of him that loves the guest,
When thus his plight!—And am I revelling
With head wreath-decked?—That thou should'st ne'er have told,
When such affliction lay upon the home!
Where doth he bury her? Where shall I find her?

SERVANT

By the straight path that leads Larissa-wards
Shalt see the hewn-stone tomb without the walls.

HERACLES

O much-enduring heart and soul of mine,
Now show what son the Lady of Tiryns bare,
Elektryon's child Alkmenè, unto Zeus.
For I must save the woman newly dead,
And set in this house again,
And render to Admetus good for good.
I go. The sable-vestured King of Corpses,
Death, will I watch for, and shall find, I trow,
Drinking the death-draught hard beside the tomb.

And if I lie in wait, and dart from ambush,
And seize, and with mine arms' coil compass him,
None is there shall deliver from mine hands
His straining sides, or e'er he yield his prey.
Yea, though I miss the quarry, and he come not
Unto the blood-clot, to the sunless homes
Down will I fare of Korè and her king,[1]
And make demand. I doubt not I shall lead
Alcestis up, and give to mine host's hands,
Who to his halls received, nor drave me thence,
Albeit smitten with affliction sore,
Who is more guest-fain[2] of Thessalians?
Who in all Hellas?—O, he shall not say
That one so princely showed a base man kindness.

(*Exit.*)

ADMETUS

O, how can I tread
Thy threshold, fair home?
How shelter mine head
'Neath thy roof, now the doom
Of the God's dice changeth?—ah me, what change upon all things is come!

For with torches aflame
Of the Pelian pine,
And with bird-song I came
In that hour divine,
Upbearing the hand of a wife—thine hand, O darling mine!

Followed revellers, raising
Acclaim: ever broke
From the lips of them praising,
Of the dead as they spoke,
And of me, how the noble, the children of kings, Love joined 'neath his yoke.

[1] Korè, the Maiden, is a title of Persephone, queen of Hades, and wife of Pluto.

[2] Hospitable.

But for bridal song
Is the wail for the dead,
And, for white-robed throng,
Black vesture hath led
Me to halls where the ghost of delight lieth couched on a desolate bed.

CHORUS

To the trance of thy bliss
Sudden anguish was brought.
Never lesson like this
To thine heart had been taught:
Yet thy life hast thou won, and thy soul hast delivered from death:—is it bought?

ADMETUS

Friends, I account the fortune of my wife
Happier than mine, albeit it seems not so.
For nought of grief shall touch her any more,
And glorious rest she finds from many toils.
But I, unmeet to live, my doom outrun,
Shall drag out bitter days: I know it now.
The solitude within shall drive me forth,
When so I see my wife's couch tenantless,
And seats whereon she sat, beneath the roof,
All foul the floor; when on my knees my babes
Falling shall weep their mother, servants moan
The peerless mistress from the mansion lost.
All this within: but from the world without
Shall bridals of Thessalians chase me: throngs
Where women gossip; for I shall not bear
On those companions of my wife to look.
And, if a foe I have, thus shall he scoff:
"Lo there who basely liveth—dared not die,
But whom he wedded gave, a coward's ransom,
And 'scaped from Hades. Count ye him a man?
He hates his parents, though himself was loth
To die!" Such ill report, besides my griefs,

Shall mine be. Ah, what profit is to live,
O friends, in evil fame, in evil plight?

CHORUS (*Sings.*)

Not as mounds of the dead which have died, so account
we the tomb of thy bride,
But O, let the worship and honour that we render to
Gods rest upon her:
Unto her let the wayfarer pray.
As he treadeth the pathway that trendeth
Aside from the highway, and bendeth
At her shrine, he shall say:
"Her life for her lord's was given;
With the Blest now abides she on high.
Hail, Queen, show us grace from thine heaven!"
Even so shall they cry.
But lo, Alkmenè's son, as seemeth, yonder,
Admetus, to thine hearth is journeying.

(*Enter* HERACLES, *leading a woman wholly veiled.*)

HERACLES

Unto a friend behooveth speech outspoken,
Thou gavest me guest-welcome in thine home,
Making pretence of mourning for a stranger.
I wreathed mine head, I spilled unto the Gods
Drink-offerings in a stricken house, even thine.
I blame thee, thus mishandled, yea, I blame thee.
Yet nowise is my will to gall thy grief.
But wherefore hither turning back I come,
This will I tell. Take, guard for me this maid,
Prize of hard toil unto mine hands she came:
For certain men I found but now arraying
An athlete-strife, toil-worthy, for all comers,
Whence I have won and bring this victor's meed.
But, as I said, this woman be thy care:
For no thief's prize, but toil-achieved, I bring her.
Yea, one day thou perchance shalt say 'twas well.

ADMETUS

Not flouting thee, nor counting among foes,
My wife's unhappy fate I hid from thee.
But this had been but grief uppiled on grief,
Hadst thou sped hence to be another's guest;
And mine own ills sufficed me to bewail.
But, for the woman—if in any wise
It may be, prince, bid some Thessalian guard her,
I pray thee, who hath suffered not as I.
In Pheræ many a friend and host thou hast.
Awaken not remembrance of my grief.
I could not, seeing her mine halls within,
Be tearless: add not hurt unto mine hurt.
Burdened enough am I by mine affliction.
Nay, in mine house where should a young maid lodge?—
Needs must I take great heed.
But, woman, thou,
Whoso thou art, know that thy body's stature
Is as Alcestis, and thy form as hers.
Ah me!—lead, for the gods' sake, from my sight
This woman!—Take not my captivity captive.
For, as I look on her, methinks I see
My wife: she stirs mine heart with turmoil: fountains
Of tears burst from mine eyes. O wretched I!
Now first I taste this grief's full bitterness.

HERACLES

O'ershoot not now the mark, but bear all bravely.

ADMETUS

Easier to exhort than suffer and be strong.

HERACLES

Time shall bring healing: now is thy grief young.

ADMETUS

Time—time?—O yea, if this thy Time be Death!

HERACLES

I praise thee for that leal thou art to her.

ADMETUS

Death be my meed, if I betray her dead.

HERACLES

Receive this woman now these halls within.

ADMETUS

O that in strife thou ne'er hadst won this maid!

HERACLES

Yet thy friend's victory is surely thine.

ADMETUS

Well said: yet let the woman hence depart.

HERACLES

Yea—if need be. First look well—need it be?

ADMETUS

Needs must—save thou wilt else be wroth with me.

HERACLES

I too know what I do, insisting thus.

ADMETUS

Have then thy will: thy pleasure is my pain.

HERACLES

Yet one day shalt thou praise me: only yield.

ADMETUS

(*To Attendants.*)

Lead ye her, if mine halls must needs receive.

HERACLES

Not to thy servants' hands will I commit her.

ADMETUS

Thou lead her in then, if it seems thee good.

HERACLES

Nay, but in thine hands will I place her—thine.

ADMETUS

I will not touch her!—Open stand my doors.

HERACLES

Unto thy right hand only trust I her.

ADMETUS

O king, thou forcest me: I will not this!

HERACLES

Be strong: stretch forth thine hand and touch thy guest.

ADMETUS

I stretch it forth, as to a headless Gorgon.

HERACLES

Hast her?

ADMETUS

I have.

HERACLES

Yea, guard her. Thou shalt call
The child of Zeus one day a noble guest.
(*Raises the veil, and discloses* ALCESTIS.)
Look on her, if in aught she seems to thee
Like to thy wife. Step forth from grief to bliss.

ADMETUS

What shall I say?—Gods!—Marvel this unhoped for!
My wife do I behold in very sooth,
Or doth some god-sent mockery-joy distract me?

HERACLES

Not so; but this thou seest is thy wife.

ADMETUS

What if this be some phantom from the shades?

HERACLES

No ghost-upraiser hast thou ta'en for guest.

ADMETUS

How?—whom I buried do I see—my wife?

HERACLES

Doubt not: yet might'st thou well mistrust thy fortune.

ADMETUS

O face, O form of my beloved wife,
Past hope I have thee, who ne'er thought to see thee!

HERACLES

Thou hast: may no god of thy bliss be jealous.

ADMETUS

O scion nobly-born of Zeus most high,
Blessings on thee! The Father who begat thee
Keep thee! Thou only hast restored my fortunes.
How didst thou bring her from the shades to light?

HERACLES

I closed in conflict with the Lord of Spirits.

ADMETUS

Where, say'st thou, didst thou fight this fight with Death?

HERACLES

From ambush by the tomb mine hands ensnared him.

ADMETUS

Now wherefore speechless standeth thus my wife?

HERACLES

'Tis not vouchsafed thee yet to hear her voice,
Ere to the Powers beneath the earth she be
Unconsecrated, and the third day come.
But lead her in, and, just man as thou art,
Henceforth, Admetus, reverence still the guest.
Farewell. But I must go, and work the work
Set by the king, the son of Sthenelus.[1]

ADMETUS

O prosper thou, and come again in peace!
For now to happier days than those o'erpast
Have we attained. I own me blest indeed.

CHORUS

O the works of the Gods—in manifold forms they reveal them:
Manifold things unhoped-for the Gods to accomplishment bring.
And the things that we looked for, the Gods deign not to fulfill them;
And the paths undiscerned of our eyes, the Gods unseal them.
So fell this marvellous thing.

(*Exeunt omnes.*)

There are many questions that Admetus might still have raised; for example, did Heracles wrest from death the soul or the body of Alcestis? How was the soul able to reënter the body? How were the Fates to be appeased for this second loss, which Death himself had so angrily prophesied in the opening scene?

Much in the little drama is unsatisfying. Despite Professor Moulton's confident and able defense of Admetus, he remains to most readers, even as to him-

[1] Eurystheus, the king whom the hero Heracles must serve.

self, ignoble, selfish, unmanly. But Alcestis, at least, has always claimed the love and admiration of mankind. In one of his tenderest sonnets Milton has a vision of his dead wife:

> "Methought I saw my late espoused saint
> Brought to me like Alcestis from the grave."

Even Shakspere, in the "Winter's Tale," has imitated freely the return of the dead queen to life. Indeed Euripides, in many of his plays, seems nearer to modern romantic drama than to the austerer Attic classicism in which he was bred. We are glad to remember that both the Brownings hailed as a near and kindred spirit

"Euripides the human."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Portions of the "Alcestis" are here taken from a brilliant translation of all Euripides' plays, in three volumes, by Way, the choral portions being rendered freely in rhymed measures much influenced by Swinburne. The prose version in the Bohn Library, by Coleridge, is prosaic indeed, but careful and scholarly. The most famous rendering of the "Alcestis" is by Mr. Browning. Together with much interpolated matter, comment, and argument, it is imbedded in his long poem "Balaustion's Adventure." Far more important, and difficult, is Mr. Browning's discussion of Euripides' and Aristophanes' merits in his "Aristophanes' Apology," which includes a very able and faithful poetical rendering of the Euripidean "Hercules Mad." The present author's first book, "Three Dramas of Euripides," covered the "Alcestis," "Medea," and "Hippolytus." The attempt was to give, in unrhymed English verse, an idea of the Greek rhythm, and to combine with the translation such discussion as an intelligent stranger might desire when first invited into the Athenian theatre.

CHAPTER IX

ARISTOPHANES' CLOUDS

Ridicule as a Moral Weapon.

Comedy developed later than tragedy, about the middle of the fifth century B.C., as another offshoot from the same Dionysiac cult. Quite unlike the mythic themes and artistic remoteness of the Æschylean drama, comedy was up-to-date, homely, grotesque. Though the parts were taken by male actors only, we hear of Athenian ladies, even children, among the auditors of tragedy: but never as present at an Attic comedy. All the decencies were—not so much violated as rather—forgotten in the rollicking festival season of the merry wine-god. Despite frequent prohibitory decrees, the foremost citizens of that turbulent democracy were unmistakably caricatured in the masks, named in the text, put to utter ridicule. Statesmen all but resistless, like Pericles or Cleon, well-beloved tragic poets like Euripides and Agathon, even the reserved Athenian ladies, or the orthodox Olympian gods, were here alike fair game. Provided the world be duly turned topsy-turvy, and a royal banquet of mirth furnished, all was permissible. We have but one of the comic poets, Aristophanes, surviving in a dozen plays, but he has no rival save the creator of Falstaff, of Caliban, of Malvolio: if even he.

Aristophanes' dramas cannot be fully and faithfully rendered to any modern audience. He is absolutely with-

out reticence or sense of decency. Yet he often poses, with unmistakable earnestness, as a moralist. That he considered Euripides a harmful innovator, Æschylus the nobler and better dramatist, cannot be questioned. So, too, the famous attack on Socrates seems to have underlying it something of ethical purpose.

Through most of the fifth century, and, on lesser scale, again in the fourth, Athens was the political centre of an extended Grecian league or empire. Her citizens were constantly engaged as jurors to try cases for Athenians or aliens. Almost any citizen must some day appear, in his own proper person, as plaintiff or defendant. Hence rhetoric and oratory became a large part of elementary education, and essential for any mercantile or political career. An extremely brilliant and famous group of "sophists" appeared from various Greek lands to teach, for money, the art of getting on in the world: of reaching, and holding safely, wealth and official position. Just at this time arose also Socrates, to teach, or rather to seek out and discuss, without pay, the true nature and moral duties of men. Aristophanes could not have been ignorant of the great gulf between the two types of teacher. Yet he seized the familiar name and picturesque mask of the apostle of righteousness, and made him the center of a most laughable parody on the school of oratory and business college.

No less sharply opposed was Socrates, the preacher of practical morality, to the vague and baseless conjectures as to the remoter mysteries of matter, spirit, and creation, that in his day masqueraded as science, or natural philosophy. Yet of this school also he is made the chief! Such is the famous comedy, "The Clouds."

The play had, and still has, a wonderful vogue. In the "Apology" it is put prominently among the causes for the indictment and condemnation of Hellas' greatest saint and sage. As such it surely demands a place here.

We can give only an outline, citing a few passages or scenes entire. Old Strepsiades, a thrifty Athenian citizen, appears first, lying awake in his room.

CLOUDS

STREPSIADES (*Stretching and yawning.*)

Ah me! Ah me! will this night never end?
O kingly Jove, shall there be no more day?
And yet the cock sung out long time ago;
I heard him—but my people lie and snore,
Snore in defiance, for the rascals know
It is their privilege in times of war,
Which with its other plagues brings this upon us,
That we mayn't rouse these vermin with a cudgel.
There's my young hopeful too, he sleeps it through,
Snug under five fat blankets at the least.
Would I could sleep so sound! But my poor eyes
Have no sleep in them; what with debts and duns
And stable-keepers' bills, which this fine spark
Heaps on my back, I lie awake the whilst:
And what cares he but to coil up his locks,
Ride, drive his horses, dream of them all night,
Whilst I, poor devil, may go hang—for now
The moon in her last quarter wanes apace,
And my usurious creditors are gaping.
What ho! a light! bring me my tablets, boy,
That I may set down all, and sum them up,
Debts, creditors, and interest upon interest.—

The youth, PHEIDIPPIDES, *presently awakes.*

PHEIDIPPIDES

My father! Why so restless? Who has vex'd you?

STREPSIADES

The sheriff vexes me; he breaks my rest.

PHEIDIPPIDES

Peace, self-tormentor, let me sleep!

STREPSIADES

Sleep on!
But take this with you: all these debts of mine
Will double on your head; a plague confound
That cursed match-maker who drew me in
To wed, forsooth, that precious dam of thine.
I liv'd at ease in the country, coarsely clad,
Rough, free, and full withal as oil and honey
And store of stock could fill me, till I took,
Clown as I was, this limb of the Alcmæons,[1]
This vain, extravagant, high-blooded dame:
Rare bed-fellows and dainty—Were we not?
I, smelling of the wine-vat, figs, and fleeces,
The produce of my farm, all essence she,
Saffron and dainty kisses, paint and washes,
A pampered wanton—idle I'll not call her;
She took due pains in faith to work my ruin,
Which made me tell her, pointing to this cloak,
Now threadbare on my shoulders—"See, good wife,
This is your work, in troth you toil too hard!"

(*The old man makes a bold resolution.*)

STREPSIADES

Get up! Come hither boy! look out!
Yon little wicket, and the hut hard by—
Dost see them?

PHEIDIPPIDES

Clearly. What of that same hut?

[1] A very aristocratic family, from which Pericles sprang.

STREPSIADES

Why that's the council chamber of all wisdom:
There the choice spirits dwell who teach the world
That Heaven's great concave is a mighty oven,
And men its burning embers; these are they,
Who can show pleaders how to twist a cause,
So you'll but pay them for it, right or wrong.

PHEIDIPPIDES

And how do you call them?

STREPSIADES

Troth, I know not that.
But they are men who take a world of pains:
Wondrous good men and able.

PHEIDIPPIDES

Out upon 'em!
Poor rogues, I know them now; you mean those scabs,
Those squalid, barefoot, beggarly impostors,
The sect of Socrates and Chærephon.

STREPSIADES

Hush! Hush! be still; don't vent such foolish prattle;
But if you'll take my counsel, join their college
And quit your riding-school.

PHEIDIPPIDES

What shall I learn?

STREPSIADES

They have a choice of logic; this for justice,
That for injustice; learn that latter art,
And all these creditors that now beset me,
Shall never touch a drachma that I owe them.

PHEIDIPPIDES

I'll learn of no such masters, nor be made
A scarecrow and a may-game for my comrades:
I have no zeal for starving.

STREPSIADES

No, nor I
For feasting you and your fine pampered cattle
At free cost any longer—Horse and foot
To the crows I bequeath you. So be gone!

PHEIDIPPIDES

Well, sir, I have an uncle rich and noble;
Megacles will not let me be unhorsed;
To him I go; I'll trouble you no longer. (*Exit.*)

STREPSIADES (*Alone.*)

He has thrown me to the ground, but I'll not lie there;
I'll up, and with the permission of the gods,
Try if I cannot learn these arts myself:
But being old, sluggish, and dull of wit,
How am I sure these subtleties won't pose me?
Well, I'll attempt it; what avails complaint?
Why don't I knock and enter?

(*The scene changes, showing the inside of the "Thinking-shop."*)

DISCIPLE (*Half opening the door.*)

Go, hang yourself, and give the crows a dinner—
What noisy fellow art thou at the door?

STREPSIADES

Strepsiades of Cicynna, son of Pheidon.

DISCIPLE

Whoe'er thou art, 'fore heaven thou art a fool
Not to respect these doors; battering so loud,
And kicking with such vengeance, you have marred
The ripe conception of my pregnant brain,
And brought on a miscarriage.

STREPSIADES

Oh! the pity!
Pardon my ignorance, I am country bred
And far afield am come; I pray you tell me
What curious thought my luckless din has strangled,
Just as your brain was hatching.

DISCIPLE

These are things
We never speak of but amongst ourselves.

STREPSIADES

Speak boldly then to me, for I am come
To be amongst you, and partake the secrets
Of your profound academy.

DISCIPLE

Enough!
I will impart, but set it down in thought
Amongst our mysteries—This is the question,
As it was put but now to Chærephon,
By our great master, Socrates, to answer,
How many of his own lengths at one spring
A flea can leap—for we did see one vault
From Chærephon's black eyebrow to the head
Of the philosopher.

STREPSIADES

And how did t'other
Contrive to measure this?

DISCIPLE

Most accurately:
He dipt the insect's feet in melted wax,
Which, hardening into sandals as it cooled,
Gave him the space by rule infallible.

STREPSIADES

Imperial Jove! what subtlety of thought!

* * * * * *

Why talk we then of Thales?[1] Open to me,
Open the school and let me see your master:
I am on fire to enter—Come, unbar!

(*The door of the school is unbarred. The Socratic scholars are seen in various grotesque situations and positions.* STREPSIADES, *with signs of astonishment draws back a step or two, then exclaims*)

Oh Hercules, defend me, who are these?
What kind of cattle have we here in view?

DISCIPLE

Where is the wonder? What do they resemble?
Methinks they're like our Spartan prisoners,
Captured at Pylos. What are they in search of?
Why are their eyes so riveted to the earth?

DISCIPLE

There their researches centre.

STREPSIADES

Tis for onions
They are in quest—Come, lads, give o'er your search;
I'll show you what you want, a noble plat,
All round and sound—But, soft! what mean those gentry,
Who dip their heads so low?

DISCIPLE

Marry, because,
Their studies lead that way: they are now diving
To the dark realms of Tartarus and Night.

[1] A famous earlier philosopher.

STREPSIADES

But why are all their cruppers mounted up?

DISCIPLE

To practise them in star-gazing, and teach them
The proper elevations; but no more:
In, fellow-students, in: if chance the master come
And find us here—

(*Addressing himself to some of his fellow-students, who were crowding about the new-comer.*)

STREPSIADES

Nay, prythee, let them stay,
And be of counsel with me in my business.

DISCIPLE

Impossible; they cannot give the time.

STREPSIADES

Now for the love of Heav'n what have we here?
Explain their uses to me.

DISCIPLE

This machine (*observing the apparatus.*)
Is for astronomy

STREPSIADES

And this?

DISCIPLE

For geometry.

STREPSIADES

As how?

DISCIPLE

For measuring the earth.

STREPSIADES

Indeed!

What, by the lot?

DISCIPLE

Nay, faith, sir, by the lump;
Ev'n the whole globe at once.
Look now, this line marks the circumference
Of the whole earth, d'ye see—This spot is Athens—

STREPSIADES

Athens! go to, I see no courts are sitting;
Therefore I can't believe you.

DISCIPLE

Nay, in truth,
This very tract is Attica.

STREPSIADES

Where's Lacedæmon?

DISCIPLE

Here, close to Athens.

STREPSIADES

Ah! how much too close—
Prythee, good friends, take that bad neighbor from us.

DISCIPLE

That's not for us to do.

STREPSIADES

The worse luck yours!
But look! (*casting up his eyes.*)
Who's this suspended in a basket?

(SOCRATES *is discovered.*)

DISCIPLE (*With solemnity.*)
HIMSELF. The HE.

STREPSIADES

The HE? What HE?

DISCIPLE

Why, Socrates.

STREPSIADES

Hah! Socrates!—(*to the scholar*) Make up to him and roar,
Bid him come down! roar lustily!

DISCIPLE

Not I:
Do it yourself; I've other things to mind. (*Exit.*)

STREPSIADES

Hoa! Socrates—What hoa! my little Socrates!

SOCRATES

Mortal, how now! Thou insect of a day,
What wouldst thou?

STREPSIADES

I would know what thou art doing.

SOCRATES

I tread in air, contemplating the sun.

STREPSIADES

Ah! then I see you're basketed so high,
That you look down upon the gods—Good hope,
You'll lower a peg on earth.

SOCRATES

Sublime in air,
Sublime in thought, I carry my mind with me,
Its cogitations all assimilated
To the pure atmosphere in which I float.
Lower me to earth, and my mind's subtle powers,

Seized by contagious dulness, lose their spirit;
For the dry earth drinks up the generous sap,
The vegetating vigor of philosophy,
And leaves it a mere husk.

STREPSIADES

What do you say?
Philosophy has sapt your vigor? Fie upon it.
But come, my precious fellow, come down quickly,
And teach me those fine things I'm here in quest of.

SOCRATES

And what fine things are they?

STREPSIADES

A new receipt
For sending off my creditors, and foiling them
By the art logical; for you shall know
By debts, pawns, pledges, usuries, executions,
I am rackt and rent in tatters.

SOCRATES

Why permit it?
What strange infatuation seized your senses?

STREPSIADES

The horse-consumption, a devouring plague;
But so you'll enter me amongst your scholars,
And tutor me like them to bilk my creditors,
Name your own price, and by the gods I swear
I'll pay you to the last drachm.

SOCRATES

By what gods?
Answer that first; for your gods are not mine.

STREPSIADES

How swear you then! as the Byzantines swear,
By their own base iron coin?

SOCRATES

Art thou ambitious
To be instructed in celestial matters,
And taught to know them clearly?

STREPSIADES

Ay, ay, in faith,
So they be to my purpose. . . . .

Socrates descends, and straightway prays his gods, the Clouds, to come to aid. As in all Aristophanic plays, mixt with satire and coarsest buffoonery, we have as sweet a strain of imaginative nature poetry as any Greek voice has uttered.

SOCRATES

Keep silence, then, and listen to a prayer,
Which fits the gravity of age to hear—
Oh! Air, all-powerful Air, which dost enfold
This pendant globe, thou vault of flaming gold,
Ye sacred Clouds, who bid the thunder roll,
Shine forth, approach, and cheer your suppliant's soul!

STREPSIADES

Hold, keep 'em off a while, till I am ready.
Ah! luckless me, would I had brought my bonnet,
And so escaped a soaking.

(*Chorus of Clouds. The scene is at the remotest part of the stage. Thunder is heard. A large and shapeless cloud is seen floating in the air, from which the following song is heard.*)

Ascend, ye watery Clouds, on high,
Daughters of Ocean, climb the sky,
And o'er the mountain's pinecapt brow
Towering, your fleecy mantle throw.
Thence let us scan the wide-stretched scene,

Groves, lawns, and rilling streams between,
And stormy Neptune's vast expanse,
And grasp all nature at a glance.
Now the dark tempest flits away,
And lo! the glittering orb of day
Darts forth his clear ethereal beam.
Come let us snatch the joyous gleam.

(Strepsiades makes a comment too vulgar for translation.)

SOCRATES

Forbear
These gross scurrilities, for low buffoons
And mountebanks more fitting. Hush! be still,
List to the chorus of their heavenly voices,
For music is the language they delight in.

CHORUS OF CLOUDS (*Approaching nearer.*)

Ye Clouds replete with fruitful showers,
Here let us seek Minerva's[1] towers,
The cradle of old Cecrops'[2] race,
The world's chief ornament and grace;
Here mystic fanes and rites divine
And lamps in sacred splendor shine;
Here the gods dwell in marble domes,
Feasted with costly hecatombs,
That round their votive statues blaze,
Whilst crowded temples ring with praise;
And pompous sacrifices here
Make holidays throughout the year,
And when gay springtime comes again,
Bromius[3] convokes his sportive train,
And pipe and song and choral dance
Hail the soft hours as they advance.

[1] Pallas Athenè, guardian of Athens.
[2] Founder of Athens.
[3] An epithet of Bacchus.

STREPSIADES

Now, in the name of Jove, I pray thee tell me
Who are these ranting dames that talk in stilts?
Of the Amazonian cast no doubt.

SOCRATES

Not so,
No dames, but Clouds celestial, friendly powers
To men of sluggish parts; from these we draw
Sense, apprehension, volubility,
Wit to confute, and cunning to ensnare.

STREPSIADES

Ay, therefore 'twas that my heart leapt within me
For very sympathy when first I heard 'em:
Now I could prattle shrewdly of first causes,
And spin out metaphysic cobwebs finely,
And dogmatize most rarely, and dispute
And paradox it with the best of you.

SOCRATES

And didst thou doubt if they were goddesses?

STREPSIADES

Not I, so help me! only I'd a notion
That they were fog, and dew, and dusky vapor.

SOCRATES

For shame! why, man, these are the nursing mothers
Of all our famous sophists, fortune-tellers,
Quacks, medicine-mongers, bards bombastical,
Chorus-projectors, star interpreters,
And wonder-making cheats.

STREPSIADES

Welcome, ladies!
Imperial ladies, welcome! an' it please
Your highnesses so far to grace a mortal,
Give me a touch of your celestial voices.

CHORUS

Hail, grandsire! who at this late hour of life
Wouldst go to school for cunning; and all hail,
Thou prince pontifical of quirks and quibbles,[1]
Speak thy full mind, make known thy wants and wishes!
Thee and our worthy Prodicus[2] excepted,
Not one of all your sophists have our ear;
Him for his wit and learning we esteem,
Thee for thy proud deportment and high looks,
In barefoot beggary strutting up and down,
Content to suffer mockery for our sake,
And carry a grave face whilst others laugh.

STREPSIADES

Oh! Mother Earth, was ever voice like this,
So reverend, so portentous, so divine!

SOCRATES

These are your only deities, all else
I flout at.

STREPSIADES

Hold! Olympian Jupiter—
Is he no god?

SOCRATES

What Jupiter? What god?
Prythee no more—away with him at once!

STREPSIADES

Sayst thou? who gives us rain? answer me that.

SOCRATES

These give us rain; as I will straight demonstrate:
Come on now—When did you e'er see it rain
Without a cloud? If Jupiter gives rain,
Let him rain down his favors in the sunshine,
Nor ask the clouds to help him.

[1] This, of course, to Socrates.
[2] A famous Sophist.

STREPSIADES

You have hit it.
'Tis so; heaven help me:
But hear ye me, who thunders, tell me that;
For then it is I tremble.

SOCRATES

These then thunder,
When they are tumbled.

STREPSIADES

How, blasphemer how?

SOCRATES

When they are charged with vapors full to the bursting,
And bandied to and fro against each other,
Then with the shock they burst and crack amain.

STREPSIADES

And who is he that jowls them thus together
But Jove himself?

SOCRATES

Jove! 'tis not Jove that does it,
But the ætherial Vortex.

STREPSIADES

What is he?
I never heard of him; is he not Jove?
Or is Jove put aside, and Vortex crowned
King of Olympus in his state and place?

* * * * * *

SOCRATES

'Tis well, so you will ratify your faith
In these our deities—CHAOS, and CLOUDS
And SPEECH—to these and only these adhere.

STREPSIADES

If from this hour henceforth I ever waste
A single thought on any other gods,
Or give them sacrifice, libation, incense,
Nay, even common courtesy, renounce me.

CHORUS

Speak your wish boldly then, so shall you prosper
As you obey and worship us, and study
The wholesome art of thriving.

STREPSIADES

Gracious ladies,
I ask no mighty favor, simply this—
Let me but distance every tongue in Greece,
And run 'em out of sight a hundred lengths.

CHORUS

Is that all? There we are your friends to serve you;
We will endow thee with such powers of speech,
As henceforth not a demagogue in Athens
Shall spout such popular harangues as thou shalt.

STREPSIADES

A fig for powers of spouting! give me powers
Of nonsuiting my creditors.

CHORUS

A trifle—
Granted as soon as asked; only be bold,
And show yourself obedient to your teachers.

STREPSIADES

With your help so I will, being undone,
Stript of my pelf by these high-blooded cattle,
And a fine dame, the torment of my life.
Now let them work their wicked will upon me;
They're welcome to my carcass; let 'em claw it,
Starve it with thirst and hunger, fry it, freeze it,

Nay, flay the very skin off; 'tis their own;
So that I may but rob my creditors,
Let the world talk; I care not though it call me
A bold-faced, loud-tongued, over-bearing bully;
A shameless, vile, prevaricating cheat;
A tricking, quibbling, double-dealing knave;
A prating, pettifogging limb o' the law;
A sly old fox, a perjurer, a hang-dog.

CHORUS

This fellow hath a prompt and daring spirit.

Despite this brave beginning, Strepsiades turns out to be a hopeless dunce, even at the arts of cheating. The Clouds advise him, if he has an apt and docile son, to send him instead to the Socratic school. So Pheidippides reluctantly permits himself to be dragged to the door.

In a long scene, Just and Unjust Argument, or as we say, the Worse and Better Reason, appear as opponents. With unusual seriousness, the good old ways of Athens are eulogized.

DICOLOGOS. (Better Reason.)

. . . . That good time,
Which I have seen, when discipline prevailed,
And modesty was sanctioned by the laws!
No babbling then was suffered in our schools,—
The scholar's test was silence. The whole group
In orderly procession sallied forth
Right onwards, without straggling, to attend
Their teacher in harmonics; though the snow
Fell on them thick as meal, the hardy brood
Breasted the storm uncloaked; their harps were strung
Not to ignoble strains, for they were taught
A loftier key, whether to chant the name
Of Pallas, terrible amidst the blaze
Of cities overthrown, or wide and far

To spread, as custom was, the echoing peal.
There let no low buffoon intrude his tricks.
Woe to his back that so was found offending,
Hard stripes and heavy would reform his taste.
Decent and chaste their postures in the school
Of their gymnastic exercises.
Hot herbs, the old man's diet, were prescribed;
No radish, anise, parsley, decked their board;
No rioting, no reveling was there
At feast or frolic.

ADICOLOGOS (Worser Reason.)

Why these are maxims obsolete and stale;
Worm-eaten rules.

DICOLOGOS

Yet so were trained the heroes that imbrued
The field of Marathon with hostile blood;
This discipline it was that braced their nerves
And fitted them for conquest.

Even the Chorus sings:

CHORUS

Oh! sage instructor, how sublime
These maxims of the former time!
How sweet this unpolluted stream
Of eloquence, how pure the theme!
Thrice happy they whose lot was cast
Among the generation past
When virtuous morals were displayed
And these grave institutes obeyed.

Yet the Devil's Advocate proves triumphantly that these are all hopelessly antiquated notions.

ADICOLOGOS

What would you say if here I can confute you?

DICOLOGOS

Nothing—my silence shall confess your triumph.

ADICOLOGOS

Come on then—answer me to what I ask.
Our advocates—what are they?

DICOLOGOS

Vulgar debauchees.

ADICOLOGOS

Our tragic poets—what are they?

DICOLOGOS

The same.

ADICOLOGOS

Good, very good!—our demagogues—

DICOLOGOS

No better.

ADICOLOGOS

See there! discern you not that you are foiled?
Cast your eyes round this company.[1]

DICOLOGOS

I do.

ADICOLOGOS

And what do you discover?

DICOLOGOS

Numerous birds
Of the same filthy feather, so Heaven help me!
This man I mark; and this, and this fine fop
With his curled locks—To all these I can swear.

ADICOLOGOS

What say you then?

[1] The audience.

DICOLOGOS

I say I am confuted—
Here, wagtails, catch my cloak—I'll be amongst you.

SOCRATES (*To* STREPSIADES.)

Now, friend, what say you? who shall school your son?

STREPSIADES

School him and scourge him! take him to yourself.
And mind you whet him to an edge on both sides,
This for slight skirmish, that for stronger work.

SOCRATES

Doubt not, we'll finish him to your content
A perfect sophist.

PHEIDIPPIDES

Perfect skin and bone—
That I can well believe.

SOCRATES

No more—Away!

(STREPSIADES *retires.*)

PHEIDIPPIDES

(*To his father, as he follows* SOCRATES *into the house.*)

Trust me, you've made a rod for your own back.

Pheidippides on his return fulfills this parting prophecy.

STREPSIADES

Hoa there! What hoa! For pity's sake some help!
Friends, kinsmen, countrymen, turn out and help!
Oh! my poor head, my cheeks are bruised to jelly—
Help, by all means!—Why, thou ungracious cub
Thy father wouldst thou beat?

PHEIDIPPIDES

Assuredly.

STREPSIADES

There! he owns that he would beat his father.

PHEIDIPPIDES

I own it, good my father.

STREPSIADES

Parricide! Impious assassin! sacrilegious wretch!

PHEIDIPPIDES

All, all, and more—You cannot please me better;
I glory in these attributes. Go on!

STREPSIADES

Monster of turpitude!

PHEIDIPPIDES

Crown me with roses!

STREPSIADES

Wretch, will you strike your parent?

PHEIDIPPIDES

Piously,
And will maintain the right by which I do it.

STREPSIADES

O shameless villain! can there be a right
Against all nature so to treat a father?

PHEIDIPPIDES

That I shall soon make clear to your conviction.

STREPSIADES

You, you convince me?

PHEIDIPPIDES

With the greatest ease:
And I can work the proof two several ways;
Therefore make choice between them.

STREPSIADES

What do you mean?

PHEIDIPPIDES

I mean to say we argue up or down—
Take which you like, it comes to the same end.

STREPSIADES

Ay, and a precious end you've brought it to.
If all my care of you must end in this,
That I have put you in the way to beat me,
(Which is a thing unnatural and profane)
And after justify it.

PHEIDIPPIDES

That I'll do
By process clear and categorical,
That you shall fairly own yourself a convert
To a most wholesome cudgeling.

STREPSIADES

Come on!
Give me your arguments—but spare your blows.
What reason, graceless cub, will bear you out
For beating me, who in your baby age
Caressed you, dandled you upon my knee,
Watched every motion, humored all your wants?

PHEIDIPPIDES

Now then, I ask you, gathering up my thread
Where it was broken off, if you, my father,
When I was but a stripling, spared my back?

STREPSIADES

No, for I studied all things for your good,
And therefore I corrected you.

PHEIDIPPIDES

Agreed,
I also am like studious of your good,
And therefore I most lovingly correct you;
If beating be a proof of love, you have it
Plenteous in measure, for by what exemption
Is your most sacred carcass freed from stripes
And mine made subject to them? Am not I
Free-born as you? Say, if the son's in tears,
Should not the father weep?

STREPSIADES

By what one rule
Of equity?

PHEIDIPPIDES

What equity were that
If none but children were to be chastised?
And grant they were, the proverb's in your teeth
Which says old age is but a second childhood.
Again, if tears are seen to follow blows,
Ought not old men to expiate faults with tears
Rather than children, who have more to plead
In favor of their failings?

STREPSIADES

Where's the law
That warrants such proceeding? There's none such.

PHEIDIPPIDES

And what was your law-maker but a man,
Mortal as you and I are? And tho' time
Has sanctified his statutes, may not I
Take up the cause of youth, as he of age,
And publish a new ordinance for leave
By the right-filial to correct our fathers?

STREPSIADES

Cease then from beating me;
Else you preclude yourself.

PHEIDIPPIDES

As how preclude?

STREPSIADES

Because the right I have of beating you
Will be your right in time over your son
When you shall have one.

PHEIDIPPIDES

But if I have none,
All my sad hours are lost, and you die laughing.

STREPSIADES

There's no denying that.—How say you, sirs?
Methinks there is good matter in this plea;
And as for us old sinners, truth to say,
If we deserve a beating we must get it.

PHEIDIPPIDES

Hear me,—there's more to come—

STREPSIADES

Then I am lost,
For I can bear no more.

PHEIDIPPIDES

Oh, fear it not,
Rather believe what I have now to tell you
Will cause you to make light of what is past,
'Twill bring such comfort to you.

STREPSIADES

Let me have it:
If it be comfort, give it me.

PHEIDIPPIDES

Then know,
Henceforth I am resolved to beat my mother
As I have beaten you.

STREPSIADES

How say you? How?
Why this were to outdo all you have done.

PHEIDIPPIDES

But what if I have got a proof in petto[1]
To show the moral uses of this beating?

STREPSIADES

Show me a proof that you have hanged yourself,
And with your tutor Socrates beside you
Gone to the devil together in a string.
Nay, nay, but rather dread avenging Jove,
God of our ancestors, and him revere.

PHEIDIPPIDES

You're mad, methinks, to talk to me of Jove—
Is there a god so called?

STREPSIADES

There is! there is!

PHEIDIPPIDES

There is no Jupiter, I tell you so;
Vortex has whirled him from his throne, and reigns
By right of conquest in the Thunderer's place.

STREPSIADES

'Tis false, no Vortex reigns but in my brain.

PHEIDIPPIDES

Laugh at your own dull joke, and be a fool! (*Exit.*)

[1] Within one's own breast.

STREPSIADES (*Striking his breast.*)

Insufferable blockhead that I was;
What ailed me thus to court this Socrates,
Even to the exclusion of the immortal gods?
O Mercury, forgive me; be not angry,
Dear tutelary god, but spare me still,
And cast a pitying eye upon my follies,
For I have been intemperate of tongue,
And dearly rue it—Oh, my better genius,
Inspire me with thy counsel how to act,
Whether by legal process to assail them,
Or by such apter means as thou mayst dictate.
I have it! Well hast thou inspired the thought;
Hence with the lazy law; thou art not for it.
With fire and faggot I will fall upon them,
And send their school *in fumo*[1] to the Clouds.
Hoa, Xanthias (*calling to one of his slaves*) hoa, bring forth without delay
Your ladder and your mattock, mount the roof,
Break up the rafters, whelm the house upon them,
And bury the whole hive beneath the ruins.

(XANTHIAS *mounts the roof and begins working with his mattock.*)

Haste! if you love me, haste! Oh, for a torch,
A blazing torch, new-lighted, to set fire
To the infernal edifice.—I warrant me
I'll soon unhouse the rascals, that now carry
Their heads so high, and roll them in the dust.

(*One of the scholars comes out.*)

DISCIPLE

Woe! Mischief! Misery!

STREPSIADES. (*Mounts the roof and fixes a torch to one of the joists.*)

Torch, play your part:
And we shall muster up a conflagration.

[1] In smoke.

DISCIPLE

What are you doing, fellow?

STREPSIADES

Chopping logic!
Arguing a knotty point with your housebeams.

DISCIPLE

Undone, and ruined—!

STREPSIADES

Heartily I wish it—
And mean you should be so if this same mattock
Does not deceive my hope, and I escape
With a whole neck.

(SOCRATES *comes forth.*)

SOCRATES

Hoa there! What man is that?
You there, upon the roof—what are you doing?

STREPSIADES

"Treading on air—contemplating the sun!"

With this merciless repetition of Socrates' first words to him, Strepsiades must have "brought down the house." Literally, at any rate, he does so, and the conflagration of the Thinking-shop makes a spectacular close for the play.

That this drama contributed to the condemnation of Socrates years later is by no means hard to believe. Certainly both Plato, in the "Apology," and Xenophon, in numerous passages of the "Recollection of Socrates," endeavored to meet and refute prejudices and calumnies which can have had no other source.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The most famous translations from Aristophanes are John Hookham Frere's versions of the "Acharnians," "Birds," "Knights," and "Frogs." They are most ingeniously rhymed, of course far from literal, and necessarily much expurgated. Kennedy's "Birds" is also clever. J. B. Rogers has prepared a complete translation of all the eleven comedies, and is publishing them successively in sumptuous volumes. The version here used, in part, appeared among T. Mitchell's selected versions, in a small volume of the British Poets in 1822, but the "Clouds" was actually translated by "the late Mr. Cumberland."

The best and frankest discussion of Aristophanes is in Symonds' "Greek Poets." Professor Shorey has an excellent short paper, with original translations, in the Warner Library. The entrance song of the "Clouds" is universally admired. A special translation of the passage by Oscar Wilde will be found in Appleton's "Greek Poets," and another by Andrew Lang in Professor Capp's well-packed volume, entitled "From Homer to Theocritus."

CHAPTER X

HERODOTUS

The Battle of Salamis.

The first great prose writer of Greece has little likeness to any modern historian. His volume shows the influence of both epic and tragic poetry. He is no student of original documents, but the prince of story-tellers. He sets forth the popular traditions, as to glorious exploits in the nation's past, and adds freely his own imaginative embroidery. Though well aware of the merits in the culture of Oriental peoples, he has a large and enthusiastic pride in his own Greek race.

The repulse of Xerxes' great invasion was a splendid and successful struggle for Greek freedom. Indirectly that contest was ours no less, since our life is so largely Greek in form and spirit. No historical author ever had a nobler and fittĕr theme.

The story culminates in the account of the battle at Salamis (480 B.C.). The Spartan king Leonidas had perished, with all his men, in the pass at Thermopylæ. Athens was captured and sacked. The Persian host, the largest army that ever assembled, was pouring on toward the Peloponnese. The Greek fleet, after one or two successful skirmishes, had retreated along the coast, to the little bay between the island of Salamis and the Attic mainland. The commanders from the various cities were panic-stricken, and preparing to flee each to his home.

That meant prompt and easy enslavement of all Greeks by Xerxes.

Then the Athenian Themistocles, who alone had foreseen the war, and insisted on the equipment of the fleet, by a desperate trick forced the unwilling Greeks to turn and fight. Thus in a single day Athens became the leader of maritime Hellas. Of the four hundred Greek ships that here defeated thrice their number, the Athenians had manned more than half.

A series of extracts will give at least a vivid glimpse of the scene.

In the council of sea-captains Themistocles addresses the Spartan admiral: the Spartans having insisted on their traditional leadership even on the sea.

Translation

"With thee it rests, O Eurybiades, to save Greece, if thou wilt only hearken unto me, and give the enemy battle here, rather than yield to the advice of those among us who would have the fleet withdrawn to the Isthmus. Hear now, I beseech thee, and judge between the two courses. At the Isthmus thou wilt fight in an open sea, which is greatly to our disadvantage, since our ships are heavier and fewer in number than the enemy's; and further, thou wilt in any case lose Salamis, Megara, and Egina,[1] even if all the rest goes well with us. The land and sea force of the Persians will advance together; and thy retreat will but draw them toward the Peloponnese, and so bring all Greece into peril. If, on the other hand, thou dost as I advise, these are the advantages which thou wilt secure: in the first place, as we shall fight in a narrow sea with few ships against many, if the war follows the common course we shall gain a great victory; for to fight in a narrow space is favorable to us—in an open sea to

[1] Lying between Attica and the Peloponnesus.

them. Again, Salamis will in this case be preserved, where we have placed our wives and children. Nay, that very point by which ye set most store, is secured as much by this course as by the other; for whether we fight here or at the Isthmus we shall equally give battle in defence of the Peloponnese. Assuredly, ye will not do well to draw the Persians upon that region. For if things turn out as I anticipate, and we beat them by sea, then we shall have kept your Isthmus free from the barbarians, and they will have advanced no further than Attica, but from thence have fled back in disorder."

When Themistocles had thus spoken, Adeimantus the Corinthian again attacked him, and bade him be silent, since he was a man without a city; at the same time he called upon Eurybiades not to put the question at the instance of one who had no country, and urged that Themistocles should show of what state he was an envoy, before he gave voice with the rest. This reproach he made, because the city of Athens had been taken, and was in the hands of the barbarians. Hereupon Themistocles spoke many bitter things against Adeimantus and the Corinthians generally; and for proof that he had a country, reminded the captains, that with two hundred ships at his command, all fully manned for battle, he had both city and territory as good as theirs; since there was no Grecian state which could resist his men if they made a descent.

(This appeal was at first successful, but next day the panic was renewed.)

Then Themistocles, when he saw that the Peloponnesians would carry the vote against him, went out secretly from the council, and, instructing a certain man what he should say, sent him on board a merchant ship to the fleet of the Medes. This man's name was Sicinnus, and he acted as tutor to Themistocles' sons.

The ship brought Sicinnus to the Persian fleet, and

there he delivered his message to the leaders in these words:—

"The Athenian commander has sent me to you privily, without the knowledge of the other Greeks. He is a well-wisher to the King's cause, and would rather success should attend on you than on his countrymen, wherefore he bids me tell you fear has seized the Greeks and they are meditating a hasty flight. Now then, it is open to you to achieve the best work that ever ye wrought, if only ye will hinder their escaping. They no longer agree among themselves, so that they will not now make any resistance—nay, 'tis likely ye may see a fight already begun between such as favor and such as oppose your cause." The messenger, when he had thus expressed himself, departed and was seen no more.

Then the captain, believing all that the messenger had said, proceeded to land a large body of Persian troops on the islet of Psyttaleia, which lies between Salamis and the mainland; after which, about the hour of midnight, they advanced their western wing toward Salamis, so as to inclose the Greeks.

Meanwhile, among the captains at Salamis, the strife of words grew fierce. As yet they did not know that they were encompassed, but imagined that the barbarians remained in the same places where they had seen them the day before.

In the midst of their contention, Aristides, the son of Lysimachus, who had crossed from Egina, arrived in Salamis. He was an Athenian, and had been ostracized by the commonalty; yet I believe, from what I have heard concerning his character, that there was not in all Athens a man so worthy or so just as he. He now came to the council, and, standing outside, called for Themistocles. Now Themistocles was not his friend, but his most determined enemy. However, under the pressure of the great dangers impending, Aristides forgot their feud, and called Themistocles out of the council, since he wished to confer with him. He had heard before his arrival of the impa-

tience of the Peloponnesians to withdraw the fleet to the Isthmus. As soon therefore as Themistocles came forth, Aristides addressed him in these words:—

"Our rivalry at all times, and especially at the present season, ought to be a struggle which of us shall most advantage our country. Let me then say to thee, that so far as regards the departure of the Peloponnesians from this place, much talk and little will be found precisely alike. I have seen with my own eyes that which I now report: That however much the Corinthians or Eurybiades himself may wish it, they cannot now retreat; for we are enclosed on every side by the enemy. Go in to them, and make this known."

—At the dawn of day all the men-at-arms were assembled together, and speeches were made to them, of which the best was that of Themistocles, who throughout contrasted what was noble with what was base, and bade them, in all that came within the range of man's nature and constitution, always to make choice of the nobler part. Having thus wound up the discourse he told them to go at once on board their ships.

The fleet had scarce left the land when they were attacked by the barbarians. At once most of the Greeks began to back water, and were about touching the shore, when Ameinias of Pallene, one of the Athenian captains, darted forth in front of the line and charged a ship of the enemy. The two vessels became entangled, and could not separate, whereupon the rest of the fleet came up to help Ameinias, and engaged with the Persians. It is also reported that a phantom in the form of a woman appeared to the Greeks, and, in a voice that was heard from end to end of the fleet cheered them on to the fight; first, however rebuking them, and saying—"Strange men, how long are ye going to back water."

Far the greater number of the Persians' ships engaged in this battle were disabled. For as the Greeks fought in order and kept their line, while the barbarians were in confusion, and had no plan in anything that they did, the

issue of the battle could scarce be other than it was. Yet the Persians fought far more bravely here than before, and indeed surpassed themselves; each did his utmost through fear of Xerxes, for each thought that the King's eye was upon himself.

What part the several nations, whether Greek or barbarian, took in the combat, I am not able to say for certain. Artemisia,[1] however, I know, distinguished herself in such a way as raised her even higher than she stood before in the esteem of the King. For after confusion had spread throughout the whole of the King's fleet, and her ship was closely pursued by an Athenian trireme, she, having no way to fly, since in front of her were a number of friendly vessels, and she was nearest of all the Persians to the enemy, resolved on a measure which in fact proved her safety. Pressed by the Athenian pursuer, she bore straight against one of the ships of her own party, a Calyndian, which had Damasithymus, the Calyndian king himself, on board. I cannot say whether she had any quarrel with the man while the fleet was at the Hellespont, or no—neither can I decide whether she of set purpose attacked his vessel, or whether it merely chanced that the Calyndian ship came in her way—but certain it is, that she bore down upon his vessel and sank it, and that thereby she had the good fortune to procure herself a double advantage. For the commander of the Athenian trireme, when he saw her bear down on one of the enemy's fleet, thought immediately that her vessel was a Greek, or else had deserted from the Persians, and was now fighting on the Greek side; he therefore gave up the chase, and turned away to attack others.

Thus in the first place she saved her life by the action, and was enabled to get clear off from the battle; while further, it fell out that in the very act of doing the King an injury, she raised herself to a greater height than ever in his esteem. For as Xerxes beheld the fight he remarked, it is said, the destruction of the vessel, whereupon the

[1] Queen of Halicarnassus, Herodotus' native city. Though a Persian, a tyrant, and an unscrupulous trickster, she is clearly a favorite of the chronicler.

bystanders observed to him—"Seest thou, master, how well Artemisia fights, and how she has just sunk a ship of the enemy?" Then Xerxes asked if it were really Artemisia's doing; and they all answered, "Certainly, for they knew her ensign:" while all made certain that the sunken vessel belonged to the opposite side. Everything, it is said, conspired to prosper the queen—it was especially fortunate for her that none of those on board the Calyndian ship survived to be her accuser. Xerxes, they say, in reply to the remarks made to him, observed—"My men have behaved like women, my women like men!"

Of the Greeks there died only a few; for as they were able to swim, all those that were not killed outright by the enemy escaped from the sinking vessels and swam across to Salamis. But on the side of the barbarians more perished by drowning than in any other way, since they did not know how to swim. The great destruction took place when the ships that had been first engaged began to fly, for they who were stationed in the rear, anxious to display their valor before the eyes of the King, made every effort to force their way to the front, and thus became entangled with such of their own vessels as were retreating.

In this confusion the following event occurred: Certain Phœnicians belonging to the ships which had thus perished appeared before the king, and laid the blame of their loss on the Ionians,[1] declaring that they were traitors, and had wilfully destroyed the vessels. But the upshot of this complaint was, that the Ionian captains escaped the death that threatened them, while their Phœnician accusers received death as their reward. For it happened that, exactly as they spoke, a Samothracian[2] vessel bore down on an Athenian and sank it, but was attacked and crippled immediately by one of the Eginetan squadron. Now the Samothracians were expert with the javelin, and aimed their weapons so well that they cleared the deck of

[1] Asiatic Greeks, then subject to Xerxes and serving under him. At the close of this war most of them were liberated, and joined the Athenian alliance.

[2] Samothrace, a Greek island, was then subject to Xerxes.

the vessel which had disabled their own, after which they sprang on board, and took it. This saved the Ionians. Xerxes, when he saw the exploit, turned fiercely on the Phœnicians,—(he was ready, in his extreme vexation, to find fault with any one)—and ordered their heads to be cut off, in order to prevent them, as he said, from casting the blame of their own misconduct upon braver men. During the whole time of the battle Xerxes sat at the base of the hill called Ægaleos,[1] over against Salamis; and whenever he saw any of his own captains perform any worthy exploit he inquired concerning him; and the man's name was taken down by his scribes, together with the name of his father and his city.

The Athenian captains had received special orders touching the queen; and moreover a reward of ten thousand drachmas had been proclaimed for any one who should make her prisoner; since there was great indignation felt that a woman should appear in arms against Athens. However, as I have said, she escaped.

As soon as the sea-fight was ended, the Greeks drew together to Salamis all the wrecks that were to be found in that quarter, and prepared themselves for another engagement, supposing that the King would renew the fight with the vessels which still remained to him.

Xerxes, when he saw the extent of his loss, began to be afraid that the Greeks might be counselled by the Ionians, or without their advice might determine, to sail straight to the Hellespont and break down the bridges there; in which case he would be blocked up in Europe, and run great risk of perishing. He therefore made up his mind to fly.

It was of course largely the cowardice of Xerxes that made this brief sea-fight so decisive. He left 300,000 picked men to complete the conquest of Greece. These were defeated and utterly destroyed the next summer at Platæa. Never again did a Persian soldier march through

[1] In Attica.

the pass of Thermopylæ, never did the sail of a Persian warship darken the waters of the Hellenic peninsula.

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CHAPTER XI

THUCYDIDES

The Periclean Funeral Oration.

It is a story oft-repeated, in various forms, that the second great Greek historian was roused to emulation, in boyhood, by hearing Herodotus read in public from his chronicle. But in spirit the twain are very far apart. The marvelous elements, the divine interventions, the oracles, have almost vanished from the scene in which the tragic story of Athens' fatal war against Sparta and the allies is austerely revealed. Human action, and purely human motive, mercilessly laid bare, fill nearly the whole view.

Yet the feeling for dramatic form is by no means lost. The dreadful defeat in the harbor of Syracuse in this tale, like the sea-fight by Salamis in Herodotus, is the supreme crisis of fate. Doubtless Thucydides intended to complete the record of the war, down to Athens' ignominious fall. But the work as we have it can hardly be called a fragment, any more than the "Iliad," which only foreshadows, not describes, the fall of Troy.

One trick of both the supreme historians seems to us audacious. In detailed speeches, often quite fictitious, the motives and aims of the leading men and states are vividly set forth. In a few cases the narrator is clearly following the main lines of a speech which he had himself heard.

Most of all is this probable in the noble memorial oration said to have been delivered by Pericles, the largest minded of Greek statesmen, over the Athenian soldiers slain in the first campaign of the war. It delineates in grand outlines the spirit and policy of the imperial city. In most readers it inspires a strong conviction that Athens was fitted to be, and should have become, the capital of a stronger, more united, and better developed Hellas than selfish conservative Sparta could ever conceive. Just how much of this speech we owe to the statesman, how much to the equally patriotic and large-souled Athenian historian, perhaps the latter himself could not have told. Quite unlike his usual rather cold style is the idealist tone, the glow of pride, with which Athens' right to national leadership is here proclaimed. The oration is in certain qualities almost un-Thucydidean, but it is those very traits that make it indispensable in this volume.

The Funeral Oration

During the same winter, in accordance with an old national custom, the funeral of those who first fell in this war was celebrated by the Athenians at the public charge. The ceremony is as follows: Three days before the celebration they erect a tent in which the bones of the dead are laid out, and everyone brings to his own dead any offering which he pleases. At the time of the funeral the bodies are placed in chests of cypress wood, which are conveyed on hearses; there is one chest for each tribe. They also carry a single empty litter, decked with a pall, for all whose bodies are missing, and cannot be recovered after the battle. The procession is accompanied by any one who chooses, whether citizen or stranger, and the female relatives of the deceased are present at the place of interment and make lamentation. The public sepulchre is situated in the most beautiful spot outside the walls; there

they always bury those who fall in war. When the remains have been laid in the earth, some man of known ability and high reputation, chosen by the city, delivers a suitable oration over them, after which the people depart. Such is the manner of interment, and the ceremony was repeated from time to time throughout the war. Over those who were the first buried Pericles was chosen to speak. At the fitting moment he advanced from the sepulchre to a lofty stage, which had been erected in order that he might be heard as far as possible by the multitude, and spoke as follows:

"I should have preferred that, when men's deeds have been brave, they should be honored in deed only, and with such honor as this public funeral, which you are now witnessing. Then the reputation of many would not have been imperilled on the eloquence or want of eloquence of one, and their virtues believed or not as he spoke well or ill. For it is difficult to say neither too little nor too much; and even moderation is apt not to give the impression of truthfulness. However, since our ancestors have set the seal of their approval on the practice, I must obey, and to the utmost of my power shall endeavor to satisfy the wishes and beliefs of all who hear me.

"I will speak first of our ancestors, for it is right and becoming that now, when we are lamenting the dead, a tribute should be paid to their memory. There has never been a time when they did not inhabit this land,[1] which by their valor they have handed down from generation to generation, and we have received from them a free state. But if they were worthy of praise, still more were our fathers, who added to their inheritance, and after many a struggle transmitted to us their sons this great empire. And we ourselves assembled here to-day, who are most of us still in the vigor of life, have mostly done the work of improvement, and have richly endowed our city with all things, so that she is sufficient for herself both in peace and in war. Of the military exploits by which our vari-

[1] The Athenians prided themselves on being *autochthonous;* sprung from the soil.

ous possessions were acquired, or the energy with which we or our fathers drove back the tide of war, Hellenic or Barbarian, I will not speak; for the tale would be long and is familiar to you. But before I praise the dead I should like to point out by what principles we rose to power, and under what institutions or through what manner of life our empire became great. For I conceive that such thoughts are not unsuited to the occasion, and that this numerous assembly of citizens and strangers may profitably listen to them.

"Our form of government does not enter into rivalry with the institutions of others. We do not copy our neighbors, but are an example to them. It is true that we are called a democracy, for the administration is in the hands of the many, and not of the few. But while the law secures equal justice for all alike in their private disputes, the claim of excellence is also recognized; and when a citizen is in any way distinguished, he is preferred to the public service, not as a matter of privilege, but as a reward of merit. Neither is poverty a bar, but a man may benefit his country whatever be the obscurity of his position. There is no exclusiveness in our public life, and in our private intercourse we are not suspicious of one another, nor angry with our neighbor if he does what he likes; we do not put on sour looks at him which, though harmless, are unpleasant. While we are thus unconstrained in our private intercourse, a spirit of reverence pervades our public acts; we are prevented from doing wrong by respect for authority and for the laws, having especial regard to those which are ordained for the protection of the injured as well as those unwritten laws which bring upon the transgressor of them the reprobation of the general sentiment.

"And we have not forgotten to provide for our weary spirits many relaxations from toil; we have regular games and sacrifices throughout the year; at home the style of our life is refined; and the delight which we daily feel in all these things helps to banish melancholy. Because of

the greatness of our city the fruits of the whole earth flow in upon us; so that we enjoy the goods of other countries as freely as our own.

"Then again, our military training is in many ways superior to that of our adversaries. Our city is thrown open to the world, and we never expel a foreigner or prevent him from seeing or learning anything of which the secret, if revealed to an enemy might profit him. We do not rely upon management or trickery, but upon our own hearts and hands. And in the matter of education, whereas they are always from early youth undergoing laborious exercises which are to make them brave, we live at ease, and yet are equally ready to face the perils which they face. And here is the proof. The Lacedæmonians come into Attica not by themselves, but with their whole confederacy following; we go alone into a neighbor's country; and although our opponents are fighting for their homes, and we on a foreign soil, we have seldom any difficulty in overcoming them. Our enemies have never yet felt our united strength; the care of a navy divides our attention, and on land we are obliged to send our own citizens everywhere. But they, if they meet and defeat a part of our army, are as proud as if they had routed us all, and when defeated they pretend to have been vanquished by us all.

"If then we prefer to meet danger with a light heart but without laborious training, and with a courage which is gained by habit and not enforced by law, are we not greatly the gainers? Since we do not anticipate the pain, although, when the hour comes, we can be as brave as those who never allow themselves to rest; and thus too our city is equally admirable in peace and in war. For we are lovers of the beautiful, yet simple in our tastes, and we cultivate the mind without loss of manliness. Wealth we employ, not for talk and ostentation, but when there is a real use for it. To avow poverty with us is no disgrace; the true disgrace is in doing nothing to avoid it. The Athenian citizen does not neglect the state because

he takes care of his own household; and even those of us who are engaged in business have a very fair idea of politics. We alone regard a man who takes no interest in public affairs, not as harmless, but as a useless character; and if few of us are originators, we are all sound judges of policy. The great impediment to action is, in our opinion, not discussion, but the want of that knowledge which is gained by discussion preparatory to action. For we have a peculiar power of thinking before we act and of acting too, whereas other men are courageous from ignorance, but hesitate upon reflection. And they are surely to be esteemed the bravest spirits who, having the clearest sense of both pains and pleasures of life, do not on that account shrink from danger. In doing good, again, we are unlike others; we make our friends by conferring, not by receiving favors. Now he who confers a favor is a firmer friend, because he would fain by kindness keep alive the memory of the obligation; but the recipient is colder in his feelings, because he knows that in requiting another's generosity he will not be winning gratitude, but only paying a debt. We alone do good to our neighbors, not on a calculation of interest, but in the confidence of freedom, and in a frank and fearless spirit.

"To sum up, I say that Athens is the school of Hellas, and that the individual Athenian in his own person seems to have the power of adapting himself to the most varied forms of action with the utmost versatility and grace. This is no passing and idle word, but truth and fact; and the assertion is verified by the position to which these qualities have raised the state. For in the hour of trial Athens alone among her contemporaries is superior to the report of her. No enemy who comes against her is indignant at the reverses which he sustains at the hands of such a city; no subject complains that his masters are unworthy of him. And we assuredly shall not be without witnesses; there are mighty monuments of our power which shall make us the wonder of this and succeeding ages; we shall not need the praise of Homer nor of any other panegyrist

whose poetry may please for the moment, although his representation of the facts will not bear the light of day. For we have compelled every land and every sea to open a path for our valor, and have everywhere planted eternal memorials of our friendship and of our enmity. Such is the city for whose sake these men nobly fought and died; they could not bear the thought that she might be taken from them; and every one of us who survive should gladly toil in her behalf.

"I have dwelt upon the greatness of Athens because I want to show you that we are contending for a higher prize than those who enjoy none of these privileges, and to establish by manifest proof the merit of these men whom I am now commemorating. A death such as theirs has been gives the true measure of a man's worth; it may be the first revelation of his virtues, but at any rate it is their final seal. Even those who come short in other ways may justly plead the valor with which they have fought for their country. On the battle-field their feet stood fast, and in an instant, at the height of their fortune, they passed away from the scene, not of their fear, but of their glory.

"Wherefore I do not now commiserate the parents of the dead who stand here; I would rather comfort them. You know that your life has been passed amid manifold vicissitudes; and that they may be deemed fortunate who have gained most honor, whether in an honorable death like theirs, or in an honorable sorrow like yours, and whose days have been so ordered that the term of their happiness is also the term of their life. I know how hard it is to make you feel this, when the good fortune of others will too often remind you of the gladness which once lightened your hearts. And sorrow is felt at the want of those blessings, not which a man never knew, but which were a part of his life before they were taken from him. Some of you are at an age where they may hope to have other children, and they ought to bear their sorrow better; not only will the children who may here-

after be born make them forget their own lost ones, but the city will be doubly a gainer. She will not be left desolate, and she will be safer. For a man's counsel cannot have equal weight or worth, when he alone has no children to risk in the general danger. To those of you who have passed their prime I say: 'Congratulate yourselves that you have been happy the greater part of your days; remember that your life of sorrow will not last long, and be comforted by the glory of those who are gone. For the love of honor alone is always young, and not riches, as some say, but honor is the delight of men when they are old and useless.'

"To you who are the sons and brothers of the departed, I see that the struggle to emulate them will be an arduous one. For all men praise the dead, and however preëminent your virtue may be, hardly will you be thought, I dare not say to equal, but even to approach them. The living have their rivals and detractors, but when a man is out of the way, the honor and good will which he receives is unalloyed. And if I am to speak of womanly virtues to those of you who will henceforth be widows, let me sum them up in one short admonition. To a woman not to show more weakness than is natural to her sex is great glory, and not to be talked about, for good or evil, among men.

"I have paid the required tribute, in obedience to the law, making use of such fitting words as I had. The tribute of deeds has been paid in part, for the dead have been honorably interred, and it remains only that the children should be maintained at the public charge until they are grown up; this is the solid prize with which, as with a garland, Athens crowns her sons living and dead, after a struggle like theirs. For where the rewards of virtue are the greatest, there the noblest citizens are enlisted in the service of the state. And now, when you have duly lamented every one his own dead, you may depart."

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CHAPTER XII

THE PLATONIC SOCRATES

An Apostle of Righteousness.

The most familiar, the homeliest, the most heroic of Greek figures, Socrates still eludes our eager gaze. He left no written word of his own. Some of his external traits we have glimpsed at, through the eyes of hostile criticism, or at least of unscrupulous ridicule. Xenophon has left a volume of "Recollections," apparently faithful reports of oral discussions by one who did not adequately grasp their higher purpose. In Plato, on the other hand, the real Socrates is freely idealized, and is even made to discourse, with learning and eloquence, on the very subjects which Xenophon tells us he conscientiously avoided —as, theology, the origin of the universe, etc. Yet, upon the whole, it is this Platonic Socrates that has impressed itself upon the imagination of mankind. That it is at least based upon vivid and loving memories of the master cannot be doubted. The dialectic skill, the merciless probing of pretence and ignorance, the genial humor and homely illustration, are equally clear in Plato and Xenophon. Many a page of the former may be as faithful a transcript from a real conversation as any in the latter. To take one of the simplest of all, in the Platonic "Lysis" Socrates discourses thus with a beautiful boy in the gymnasium:—

SOCRATES

Lysis, I suppose your father and mother love you very dearly.

LYSIS

Very dearly.

SOCRATES

They would wish you, then, to be as happy as possible.

LYSIS

Of course.

SOCRATES

Do you think a man happy if he is a slave, and cannot do what he wants?

LYSIS

No, that indeed I don't.

SOCRATES

Well, if your father and mother love you, and wish you to become happy, it is clear that they try in every way to make you happy.

LYSIS

To be sure they do.

SOCRATES

They allow you then, I suppose to do what you wish, and never scold you, or hinder you from doing what you want to do.

LYSIS

Yes, but they do though, Socrates, and pretty frequently too.

SOCRATES

How? They wish you to be happy, and yet hinder you from doing what you want! But tell me this: if you wanted to ride on one of your father's chariots, and take the reins during a race, would they not allow you?

LYSIS

No, most assuredly they would not.

SOCRATES

Whom would they then?

LYSIS

There is a charioteer paid by my father.

SOCRATES

Paid! Do they allow a paid servant in preference to you to do what he pleases with the horses, and what is more, give him money for so doing?

LYSIS

No doubt about it, Socrates.

SOCRATES

Well, but your pair of mules I am sure they let you drive, and even if you wished to take the whip, and whip them, I am sure they would allow you.

LYSIS

Allow me, would they?

SOCRATES

Would they not? Is there no one allowed to whip them?

LYSIS

Of course there is; the mule driver.

SOCRATES

Is he a slave or free?

LYSIS

A slave

SOCRATES

A slave then, it appears, they think of more account than you, their son, and they allow him to do what he pleases, while you they hinder. But come now, when you go home to your mother, she, I am sure, lets you do what you please—that you may be as happy as she can make you—either with her wool or her loom, when she is spinning. It cannot be possible that she hinders you from touching her shuttle or her comb, or any other of her spinning implements.

LYSIS (*Laughing.*)

I can assure you, Socrates, she not only hinders me, but would get me a good beating if I did touch them.

SOCRATES

Beating! You haven't done your father or mother any wrong have you?

LYSIS

Not I.

SOCRATES

Whatever is the reason, then, that they hinder you in this shocking manner from being happy, and doing what you like; and keep you all the day long in bondage to some one or other,—and, in a word, doing hardly anything at all you want to do? So that it seems you get no good whatever from your fortune, large as it is, but all have control over it rather than you; nor again from that beautiful person of yours; for it too is under the care and charge of other people, while you, poor Lysis, have control over nothing at all, nor do a single thing which you wish.

In Xenophon this chat would close at some such point as this, leaving the sting of dissatisfaction in the youth's mind until he craves the master's probe again. In Plato

it is but an introduction to a labored though indecisive discussion on the origin and definition of Love or Affection.

The chief account of Socrates' call to his life-mission, and of the spirit in which he followed it, is found in the "Apology," or defense before his judges. This is strictly a dialogue, like all Plato's works, because at one point the accuser, in accordance with Athenian law, has to answer such questions as Socrates puts to him. In the main, however, the "Apology" is an unbroken and eloquent appeal: rather to the judgment of aftertime than to the actual jury.

The Apology

I have to defend myself, Athenians, first against the old false charges of my old accusers, and then against the later ones of my present accusers. For many men have been accusing me to you, and for very many years, who have not uttered a word of truth; they got hold of most of you when you were children, and they have been most persistent in accusing me with lies, and in trying to persuade you that there is one Socrates, a wise man, who speculates about the heavens, and who examines into all things that are below the earth, and who can "Make the worse appear the better reason." And the most unreasonable thing of all is that commonly I do not even know their names; I cannot tell you who they are, except in the case of the comic poets.

Let us begin again, then, and see what is the charge which has given rise to the prejudice against me, which is what Meletus relied on when he drew his indictment. What is the calumny which my enemies have been spreading against me. I must assume that they are formally accusing me, and read their indictment. It would run somewhat in this fashion. "Socrates is an evil-doer, who meddles with inquiries into things beneath the earth, and

in heaven, and who 'makes the worse appear the better reason,' and who teaches others these same things." That is what they say; and in the comedy of Aristophanes you yourselves saw a man called Socrates swinging around in a basket, and saying that he walked the air, and talking a great deal of nonsense about matters of which I understand nothing, either more or less.

Perhaps some of you may reply: "But Socrates, what is this pursuit of yours? Whence come these calumnies against you? You must have been engaged in some pursuit out of the common. All these stories and reports of you would never have gone about if you had not been in some way different from other men. So tell us what your pursuits are that we may not give our verdict in the dark."

I think that that is a fair question, and I will try to explain to you what it is that has raised these calumnies against me, and given me this name. Listen, then; some of you will think that I am jesting; but I assure you that I will tell you the whole truth. I have gained this name, Athenians, simply by reason of a certain wisdom. Do not interrupt me, Athenians, even if you think that I am speaking arrogantly. What I am going to say is not my own; I will tell you who says it, and he is worthy your credit. I will bring the god of Delphi to be the witness of the fact of my wisdom, and of its nature.

You remember Chærephon. From youth upwards he was my comrade. You remember too Chærephon's character; how vehement he was in carrying through whatever he took in hand. Once he went to Delphi and ventured to put this question to the oracle,—I entreat you again, my friends, not to cry out,—he asked if there was any man who was wiser than I, and the priestess answered that there was no man.

When I heard of the oracle, I began to reflect: "What can the god mean by this dark saying? I know very well that I am not wise, even in the smallest degree. Then what can he mean by saying that I am the wisest of men?

It cannot be that he is speaking falsely, for he is a god and cannot lie." And for a long time I was at a loss to understand his meaning; then, very reluctantly, I turned to seek for it in this manner. I went to a man who was reputed to be wise, thinking that there, if anywhere, I should prove the answer wrong, and meaning to point out to the oracle its mistake, and to say, "you said that I was the wisest of men, but this man is wiser than I." So I examined this man—I need not tell you his name, he was a politician—but this was the result, Athenians. When I came to converse with him, I saw that though a great many persons, and most of all himself, thought that he was wise, yet he was not wise. And then I tried to prove to him that he was not wise, though he fancied that he was; and by so doing, I made him, and many of the bystanders, my enemies. So when I went away I thought to myself, I am wiser than this man: neither of us probably knows anything that is really good, but he thinks that he has knowledge, when he has not. While I, having no knowledge, do not think that I have. I seem at any rate to be a little wiser than he on this point; I do not think that I know what I do not know. Next I went to another man who was reputed to be still wiser than the last, with exactly the same result. And there again, I made him, and many other men, my enemies.

Then I went on to one man after another, seeing that I was making enemies every day, which caused me much unhappiness and anxiety: since I still thought I must set the god's command above everything. So I had to go to every man who seemed to possess any knowledge, and search for the meaning of the oracle: and Athenians, I must tell you the truth; verily, by the dog of Egypt,[1] this was the result of the search which I made at the god's bidding. I found that the men whose reputations for wisdom stood the highest were nearly always the most lacking in it; while others, who were looked down upon as common people, were much better fitted to learn.

[1] The dogheaded god Anubis. Socrates has a humorous fondness for strange oaths.

Now, I must describe to you the wanderings which I undertook, like a series of Herculean labors, to make full proof of the oracle. After the politicians, I went to the poets, tragic, dithyrambic,[1] and others, thinking that there I should find myself manifestly more ignorant than they. So I took up the poems on which I thought that they had spent most pains, and asked them what they meant,—hoping at the same time to learn something from them. I am ashamed to tell you the truth, my friends, but I must say it. Almost any one of the bystanders could have talked about the works of those poets better than the poets themselves. So I soon found that it is not by wisdom that the poets create their works, but by a certain natural power and inspiration, like soothsayers and prophets, who say many fine things, but understand nothing of what they say. The poets seemed to me to be in a similar case. And at the same time, I perceived that, because of their poetry, they thought that they were the wisest of men in other matters, in which they were not. So I went away again, thinking that I had the same advantage over the poets that I had over the politicians.

Finally I went to the artisans, for I knew very well that I possessed no knowledge at all, worth speaking of, and I was sure that I should find that they knew many fine things. And in that I was not mistaken. They knew what I did not know, and so far they were wiser than I. But, Athenians, it seemed to me that the skilled artisans made the same mistake as the poets. Each of them believed himself to be extremely wise in matters of great importance, because he was skilful in his own art; and this mistake of theirs threw their real wisdom into the shade. So I asked myself, on behalf of the oracle, whether I would choose to remain as I was, without either their wisdom or their ignorance, or to possess both, as they did. And I made answer to myself that it was better to remain as I was.

By reason of this examination, Athenians, I have made

[1] The dithyramb is the special choral song in Bacchus' honor.

myself many enemies of a very fierce and bitter kind, who have spread abroad a great many calumnies about me, and people say that I am "a wise man." For the by-standers always think that I am wise myself in any matter wherein I convict another man of ignorance. But, my friends, I believe that only the god is really wise, and that by this oracle he meant that men's wisdom is worth little or nothing. I do not think that he meant that Socrates was wise. He only made use of my name, and took me as an example, as though he would say to men: "He among you is the wisest, who, like Socrates, knows that his wisdom is worth nothing at all."

And so I still go about testing and examining every man whom I think wise, whether he be a citizen or a stranger, as the god has commanded me; and whenever I find that he is not wise, I point out to him on the part of the god that he is not wise. And I am so busy in this pursuit that I have never had leisure to take any part worth mentioning in public matters, nor to look after my private affairs. I am in very great poverty by reason of my service to the god.

Perhaps some one will say: "Are you not ashamed, Socrates, of following pursuits which are very likely now to cause your death?" I should answer him with justice, and say: "My friend, if you think that a man of any worth at all ought to reckon the chances of life and death when he acts, or that he ought to think of anything but whether he acts rightly or wrongly, and as a good or bad man would act, you are grievously mistaken. According to you, the demigods who died at Troy would be of no great worth, and among them the son of Thetis,[1] who thought nothing of danger when the alternative was disgrace. For when his mother, a goddess, addressed him, as he was burning to slay Hector, I suppose in this fashion: 'My son, if thou avengest the death of thy comrade Patroclus, and slayest Hector, thou wilt die thyself, for "Fate awaits thee straightway after Hector's death," ' he

[1] Achilles.

heard what she said, but scorned danger and death. He feared much more to live a coward and not to avenge his friend. 'Let me punish the evildoer and straightway die,' he said, 'that I may not remain here by the beaked ships, a scorn of men, encumbering the earth.' Do you suppose that he ever thought of danger or death? For this, Athenians, I believe to be the truth. Whatever a man's post is, whether he has been placed in it of his own will, or has been placed in it by his commander, there it is his duty to remain and face the danger, without thinking of death, or of any other thing, except dishonor."

For to fear death, my friends, is only to think ourselves wise, without being wise: for it is to think that we know what we do not know. For anything that men can tell, death may be the greatest good that can happen to them, but they fear it as if they knew quite well that it was the greatest of evils. And what is this but that shameful ignorance of thinking we know what we do not know? In this matter too, my friends, perhaps I am different from the mass of mankind; and if I were to claim to be at all wiser than others, it would be because I do not think that I have any clear knowledge about the other world, when, in fact, I have none. But I do know very well that it is evil and base to do wrong, and to disobey my superior, whether he be man or god. And I will never do what I know to be evil, and shrink in fear from what, for all that I can tell, may be a good.

If you were therefore to say to me, "Socrates, this time we will not listen to Anytus; we will let you go; but on this condition, that you will cease from carrying on this search of yours, and from philosophy; if you are found following these pursuits again you shall die." I say, if you offered to let me go on those terms, I should reply:—"Athenians, I hold you in the highest regard and love, but I will obey the god rather than you; and as long as I have breath and strength I will not cease from philosophy, and from exhorting you, and declaring the truth to every one of you whom I meet, saying, as I am wont,

'My excellent friend, you who are a citizen of Athens, a city which is very great and very famous for wisdom and power of mind; are you not ashamed of caring so much for the making of money, and for reputation, and for honor? Will you not think and care about wisdom, and truth, and the perfection of your soul?' " And if he disputes my words, and says that he does care about these things, I shall not forthwith release him and go away; I shall question him and cross-examine him and test him, and if I think that he has not virtue, though he says that he has, I shall reproach him for setting the lower value on the higher things, and a higher value on those that are of less account. This I shall do to every one whom I meet, young or old, citizen or stranger; but more especially to the citizens, for they are more nearly akin to me. For I know well, the god has commanded me to do so.

Socrates was condemned on the charge of having corrupted the young, neglected the gods of the city, and introduced strange divinities. The last charge may have been helped out by the absurd worship of the Clouds, Vortex, etc., in the comedy of Aristophanes, but was no doubt chiefly based on Socrates' own allusions to the *Daimonion*, or divine voice of warning, in his own breast. This companion was very like a Christian conscience.

The account of Socrates' death occurs in the "Phædo." The day has been spent in a discussion with his friends, on Immortality, much of which is so abstruse and learned as to be clearly Plato's utterance, and his alone; though the real Socrates may well have spent his last hours in some such fashion. Even the final incidents are, no doubt, much modified from the reality, since he who dies by hemlock is not merely paralyzed, but plunged into violent convulsions. But that is only saying that this heroic death scene is literature, not a mere report of

facts. The spirit is no less Socratic, though the artist's hand be Plato's.

The long dialogue closes with a large constructive sketch of the universe, with the location of what we would call Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory. After mentioning the final doom of the incurably wicked, and the purifying pains of penitent sinners, Socrates continues:

TRANSLATION

Those also who are remarkable for having led holy lives are released from this earthly prison, and go to their pure home which is above, and dwell in the purer earth; and those who have duly purified themselves with philosophy live henceforth altogether without the body, in mansions fairer far than these, which may not be described, and of which the time would fail me to tell.

I do not mean to affirm that the description which I have given of the soul and her mansions is exactly true—a man of sense ought hardly to say that. But I do say that, inasmuch as the soul is said to be immortal, he may venture to think, not improperly or unworthily, that something of the kind is true. The venture is a glorious one, and he ought to comfort himself with words like these, which is the reason why I lengthen out this tale. Wherefore, I say, let a man be of good cheer about his soul, who has cast away the pleasures and ornaments of the body as alien to him, and rather hurtful in their effects, and has followed after the pleasures of knowledge in this life; who has adorned the soul in her own proper jewels, which are temperance and justice, and courage, and nobility, and truth—in these arrayed, she is ready to go on her journey to the world below, when her time comes. You, and all other men, will depart at some time or other. Me already, as the tragic poet says, the voice of fate calls. Soon I must drink the poison, and I think that I had better repair to the bath first, in order that the women may not have the trouble of washing my body after I am dead.

When he had done speaking, Crito said: And have you any commands for us, Socrates,—anything to say about your children, or any other matter in which we can serve you?

Nothing in particular, he said; only, as I have always told you, I would have you look to yourselves; that is a service which you can always be doing to me and mine as well as to yourselves.

We will do our best, said Crito. But in what way would you have us bury you?

In any way that you like; only you must get hold of me, and take care that I do not walk away from you. Then he turned to us, and added with a smile: I cannot make Crito believe that I am the same Socrates who has been talking and conducting the argument; he fancies that I am the other Socrates whom he will soon see, a dead body—and he asks—How shall he bury me? And though I have spoken many words in the endeavor to show that when I have drunk the poison I shall leave you and go to the joys of the blessed—these words of mine, with which I comforted you and myself, have had, as I perceive, no effect upon Crito. And therefore I want you to be surety for me now, as he was surety for me at the trial; but let the promise be of another sort; for he was my surety to the judges that I would remain, but you must be my surety to him that I shall not remain, but go away and depart; and then he will suffer less at my death, and not be grieved when he sees my body being burned or buried. I would not have him sorrow at my hard lot, or say at the burial, Thus we lay out Socrates, or, Thus we follow him to the grave or bury him, for false words are not only evil in themselves, but they infect the soul with evil. Be of good cheer, then, my dear Crito, and say that you are burying my body only, and do with that as is usual, and as you think best.

When he had spoken these words he arose and went into the bath chamber with Crito, who bade us wait; and we waited, talking and thinking of the subject of discourse,

and also of the greatness of our sorrow; he was like a father of whom we were being bereaved, and we were about to pass the rest of our lives as orphans. When he had taken the bath his children were brought to him—(he had two young sons and an elder one); and the women of his family also came, and he talked to them and gave them a few directions in the presence of Crito; and he then dismissed them and returned to us.

Now the hour of sunset was near, for a good deal of time had passed while he was within. When he came out he sat down with us again after his bath; but not much was said. Soon the jailer entered and stood by him, saying: "To you, Socrates, whom I know to be the noblest and gentlest and best of all who ever came to this place, I will not impute the angry feelings of other men, who rage and swear at me, when, in obedience to the authorities, I bid them drink the poison—indeed I am sure that you will not be angry with me; for others, as you are aware, and not I, are the guilty cause. And so fare you well, and try to bear lightly what needs must be; you know my errand." Then bursting into tears he turned away and went out.

Socrates looked at him and said: "I return your good wishes, and will do as you bid." Then, turning to us, he said, "How charming the man is: since I have been in prison he has always been coming to see me, and now see how generously he sorrows for me. But we must do as he says, Crito; let the cup be brought, if the poison is prepared; if not let the attendant prepare some."

"Yet," said Crito, "the sun is still upon the hilltops, and many a one has taken the draught late, and after the announcement has been made to him, has eaten and drunk, and indulged in sensual delights; do not hasten, then, there is still time."

Socrates said: "Yes, Crito, and they of whom you speak are right in doing this, for they think that they will gain by the delay; but I am right in not doing thus, for I do not think that I should gain anything by drinking the

poison a little later; I should be sparing and saving a life which is already gone; I could only laugh at myself for this. Please then do as I say, and not refuse me."

Crito, when he heard this, made a sign to the servant; and the servant went in, and remained for some time, and then returned with the jailer, carrying the cup of poison. Socrates said: "You, my good friend, who are experienced in these matters, shall give me directions how I am to proceed." The man answered: "You have only to walk about until your legs are heavy, and then to lie down, and the poison will act." At the same time he handed the cup to Socrates, who in the easiest and gentlest manner, without the least fear or change of color or feature, looking at the man with all his eyes, as his manner was, took the cup and said: "What do you say about making a libation out of this cup to any god? May I, or not?" The man answered: "We only prepare, Socrates, just so much as we deem enough." "I understand," he said; "yet I may and must pray to the gods to prosper my journey from this to that other world—may this then, which is my prayer, be granted to me." Then holding the cup to his lips, quite readily and cheerfully he drank off the poison. And hitherto most of us had been able to control our sorrow; but when we saw him drinking, and saw too that he had finished the draught, we could no longer forbear, and in spite of myself my own tears were flowing fast; so that I covered my face and wept over myself, for certainly I was not weeping over him, but at the thought of my own calamity in having lost such a companion. Nor was I the first, for Crito, when he found himself unable to restrain his tears, had got up and moved away, and I followed; and at that moment Apollodorus, who had been weeping all the time, broke out into a loud cry which made cowards of us all. Socrates alone retained his calmness: "What is this strange outcry?" he said. "I sent the women away mainly that they might not offend in this way, for I have heard that a man should die in peace. Be quiet then, and have patience."

When we heard that, we were ashamed and refrained our tears; and he walked about until, as he said, his legs began to fail, and then he lay on his back, according to the directions, and the man who gave him the poison now and then looked at his feet and legs, and after a time he pressed his foot hard, and asked him if he could feel; and he said no; and then his leg, and so upwards and upwards, and showed us that he was cold and stiff. And he felt them himself, and said: "When the poison reaches the heart, that will be the end." He was beginning to grow cold about the groin when he uncovered his face, for he had covered himself up, and said (they were his last words) —he said: "Crito, I owe a cock to Asclepius; will you remember to pay the debt?" "The debt shall be paid," said Crito; "is there anything else?" There was no answer to this question; but in a minute or two a movement was heard, and the attendant uncovered him; his eyes were set, and Crito closed his eyes and mouth.

Such was the end, Echecrates, of our friend, whom I may truly call the wisest, and justest, and best of all the men whom I have ever known.

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Jowett's translation of all Plato's works, in five stately volumes, will long remain without a rival in England. It contains also valuable introductions, analyses, etc. Grote's "Plato" and the "Other Companions of Socrates" is a very learned and valuable work by a somewhat unsympathetic critic. Much less ponderous than these are two volumes of the Golden Treasury series, one containing the "Republic," the other the four dialogues descriptive of Socrates' trial, imprisonment, and death. Even more readable are the little volumes of selections from Plato, published by Scribner, "A Day in Athens with Socrates," "Talks with Athenian Youths," etc.

CHAPTER XIII

DEMOSTHENES ON THE CROWN

An Ideal of Civic Patriotism.

Athens never regained the political supremacy upheld by Pericles in the middle of the fifth century B.C., and lost, at its close, in the Peloponnesian war. (431–404 B.C.) Yet in the central decades of the fourth century she was stronger than any other one of the Hellenic cities, and became the leader of a forlorn hope against the semi-barbarous kingdom of Macedonia. The autocratic power, tireless energy, and unscrupulous craft of King Philip (360–336 B.C.) easily baffled, and finally crushed, the disunited, peace-loving, mercantile cities of the peninsula. Yet the eloquence of Demosthenes, still preserved in a long series of carefully polished speeches, has made him even more famous than his victorious opponent. He utters, in words that glow and thrill even now, the purest patriotism, the most unselfish devotion to duty and honor.

The details of the long hopeless struggle can no longer be of vital interest to us. Indeed, when Demosthenes' masterpiece, the oration on the Crown, was pronounced, the last hope of freedom had vanished, and Alexander, secure of Hellas' submissiveness, had already begun, with the army which his father Philip had prepared and trained, his amazing career of Asiatic conquest.

Ctesiphon, a friend of the orator, had proposed that a golden crown,—a customary honor,—be presented to him

for public services and personal sacrifices. Demosthenes' lifelong enemy and rival Æschines, who had probably accepted bribes from Philip, now impeached the mover for illegal action. Aside from minor technicalities, the chief charge was that the whole career of Demosthenes had injured, not benefited, the Athenian people. So the master, while nominally defending his friend, must actually review in full his own public life. The overwhelming power of Macedon made necessary a certain degree of caution in tone. Even his warmest admirers had to confess that Demosthenes' policy had not been finally successful. Under these circumstances, the brave words here uttered may be regarded as the last, and also the noblest, Athenian utterance of democratic sentiment.

Translation

As I am, it appears, on this day to render an account both of my private life and of my public measures, I would fain, in the outset, call the gods to my aid; and in your presence implore them, first, that the good will which I have ever cherished toward the commonwealth and all of you may be fully requited to me on the present trial; next, that they may direct you to such a decision upon this indictment, as will conduce to your common honor, and to the good conscience of each individual.

The conquests which Philip had got and held before I commenced life as a statesman and orator, I shall pass over, as I think they concern not me. Those that he was baffled in from the day of my entering such duties, I will call to your recollection, and render an account of them; premising one thing only—Philip started, men of Athens, with a great advantage. It happened that among the Greeks—not some but all alike—there sprang up a crop of traitors and venal wretches, such as in the memory of man had never been before. These he got for his agents

and supporters: the Greeks, already ill disposed and unfriendly to each other, he brought into a still worse state, deceiving this people, making presents to that, corrupting others in every way; and he split them into many parties, when they all had one interest, to prevent his aggrandisement. While the Greeks were all in such a condition,—in ignorance of the gathering and growing mischief—you have to consider, men of Athens, what policy and measures it became the commonwealth to adopt, and of this to receive a reckoning from me; for the man who assumed that post in the administration was I.

Ought she, Æschines, to have cast off her spirit and dignity, and helped to acquire for Philip the dominion of Greece, and extinguished the honors and rights of our ancestors? Or, if she did not this—which would indeed have been shameful—was it right that what she saw would happen if unprevented, and was for a long time, it seems, aware of, she should suffer to come to pass?

I would gladly ask the severest censurer of our acts, with what party he would have wished the commonwealth to side,—with those who contributed to the disgraces and disasters of the Greeks, or those who permitted it all for the hope of selfish advantage? But many of them, or rather all, would have fared worse than ourselves. If Philip after his victory had immediately marched off and kept quiet, without molesting any either of his own allies or the Greeks in general, still they that opposed not his enterprises would have merited some blame and reproach. But when he has stripped all alike of their dignity, their authority, their liberty—nay, even of their constitutions, where he was able,—can it be doubted that you took the most glorious course in pursuance of my counsels?

But I return to the question—What should the commonwealth, Æschines, have done, when she saw Philip establishing an empire and dominion over Greece? Or what was your statesman to advise and move?—I, a statesman at Athens?—for this is most material—I who

knew that from the earliest time, until the day of my own mounting the platform, our country had ever striven for precedency, and honor, and renown, and had expended more blood and treasure for the sake of glory and the general weal than the rest of Greece had expended on their several interests? who saw that Philip himself, with whom we were contending, had, in the strife for power and empire, had his eye cut out, his collarbone fractured, his hand and leg mutilated,[1] and was ready and willing to sacrifice any part of his body that fortune chose to take, provided he could live with the remainder in honor and glory? Hardly will any one venture to say this—that it became a man bred at Pella, then an obscure and inconsiderable place, to possess such an inborn magnanimity, as to aspire to the mastery of Greece, and form the project in his mind, whilst you, who were Athenians, day after day in speeches and in dramas reminded of the virtue of your ancestors, should have been so base, as of your own free will and accord to surrender to Philip the liberty of Greece. No one will say this!

The only course then that remained was a just resistance to all his attacks upon you. Such course you took from the beginning, properly and becomingly; and I assisted by motions and counsels during the period of my political life—I acknowledge it. But what should I have done? I put this question to you, dismissing all else.

I ask—the man who was appropriating to himself Eubœa, and making it a fortress against Attica, and subjugating the Hellespont, and besieging Byzantium,[2] and destroying some of the Greek cities, restoring exiles to others,—was he, by all these proceedings, committing injustice, breaking the truce, violating the peace, or not? Was it meet that any of the Greeks should rise up to prevent these proceedings or not? If no, if Greece should have lain passive and helpless, whilst Athenians had life and being, then I have exceeded my duty in speaking on the

[1] Philip, a soldier from boyhood, had been often wounded in battle.

[2] Later known as Constantinople, and of course always the key to the Black Sea.

subject, the commonwealth has exceeded her duty which followed my counsels, I admit that every measure has been a misdeed, a blunder of mine. But if some one ought to have arisen, to prevent these things, who but the Athenian people should it have been? Such then was the policy which I espoused.

Hundreds of cases which I could mention I pass over —sea-fights, land-marches, campaigns, both in ancient times and in your own, all of which the commonwealth has undertaken for the freedom and safety of the Greeks in general. Then, having observed the commonwealth engaging in contests of such number and importance for the interests of others, what was I to urge, what course to recommend her, when the question in a manner concerned herself?—To revive grudges, I suppose, against people who wanted help, and to seek pretences for abandoning everything. And who might not justly have killed me, had I attempted even by words to tarnish any of the honors of Athens? For the thing itself, I am certain, you would never have done. Had you wished, what was to hinder you? Any lack of opportunity? Had you not these men to advise it?

Whilst you on these occasions sat mute in the assembly, I came forward and spake. However, as you omitted then, tell us now. Say, what scheme that I ought to have devised, what favorable opportunity, was lost to the state by my neglect? What alliance was there, what better plan, to which I should have directed the people? But No! The past is with all the world given up; no one even proposes to deliberate about it: the future it is, or the present, which demands the action of a counsellor. At the time, as it appears, there were dangers impending, and dangers at hand. Mark the line of my policy at that crisis; do not rail at the event. The end of all things is what the Deity pleases: it is his line of policy that shows the judgment of the statesman. Do not then impute it as a crime to me, that Philip chanced to conquer in battle: that issue depended not on me but on God. Prove that

I adopted not all measures that according to human calculation were feasible, that I did not honestly and diligently, and with exertions beyond my strength, carry them out, or that my enterprises were not honorable and worthy of the state, and necessary. Show me this, and accuse me as soon as you like. But if the hurricane that visited us has been too powerful, not for us only, but for all Greece beside, what is the fair course? As if a merchant, after taking every precaution, and furnishing a vessel with everything that he thought would ensure her safety, because afterwards he met with a storm, and his tackle was strained, or broken to pieces, should be charged with the shipwreck! "Well, but I was not the pilot," he might say, just as I was not the general. "Fortune was not under my control: all was under hers."

If the future was revealed to you, Æschines, alone, when the state was deliberating on these proceedings, you ought to have forewarned us at the time. If you did not foresee it you are responsible for the same ignorance as the rest. Why then do you accuse me in this rather than I you? A better citizen have I been than you, inasmuch as I gave myself up to what seemed for the general good, not shrinking from any personal danger, nor taking thought of any, whilst you neither suggested better measures, nor lent any aid in the prosecuting of mine.

But since he insists so strongly on the result, I will even assert something of a paradox: and I beg and pray of you not to marvel at its boldness, but kindly to consider what I say. If then the results had been foreknown to all, if all had foreseen them, and you, Æschines, had foretold them and protested with clamor and outcry,—you that never opened your mouth—not even then should the Commonwealth have abandoned her designs, if she had any regard for glory, or ancestry, or futurity. As it is, she appears to have failed in her enterprise, a thing to which all mankind are liable, if the Deity so wills it: but then, claiming precedency over others, and afterwards abandoning her pretensions, she would have incurred the

charge of betraying all to Philip. Why, had we resigned without a struggle that which our ancestors encountered every danger to win, who would not have spit upon you?

With what eyes, I pray, should we have beheld strangers visiting the city, if the result had been what it is, and Philip had been chosen leader and lord of all, but other people, without us, had made the struggle to prevent it; especially when in former times our country had never preferred an ignominious security to the battle for honor? For what Grecian or what barbarian is ignorant, that by the Thebans, or by the Lacedæmonians who were in might before them,[1] or by the Persian king, permission would thankfully and gladly have been given to our Commonwealth, to take what she pleased and hold her own, provided she would accept foreign law and let another power command in Greece? But, as it seems, to the Athenians of that day such conduct could not have been national, or natural, or endurable: none could at any period of time persuade the commonwealth to attach herself in secure subjection to the powerful and unjust: through every age has she persevered in the perilous struggle for precedency and honor and glory.

And this you esteem so noble, and congenial to your principles, that among your ancestors you honor most those who acted in such a spirit; and with reason. For who would not admire the virtue of those men, who resolutely embarked in their galleys, leaving country and home, rather than receive foreign laws, choosing Themistocles who gave such council for their general, and stoning Kyrsilus to death who advised submission to the terms imposed—nor him only, but your wives also stoning his wife? Yes; the Athenians of that day looked not for an orator or a general, who might help them to a pleasant

[1] The Athenians considered themselves the leading state of Greece from the end of the war against Xerxes, 478 B. C., to their decisive defeat by Sparta at the close of the Peloponnesian War. Then Sparta led until the great Theban Epaminondas brought his city into the leadership. After his career (371–362 B.C.) Thebes rapidly declined, and Philip's reign (360–336) saw Macedonia establish herself as complete master of Greece. The decisive victory of Philip, very often alluded to by Demosthenes, was won at Chæronea, against the united Athenians and Thebans, in 338 B.C.

servitude: they scorned to live, if it could not be with freedom. For each of them considered, that he was not born to his father or mother only, but also to his country. What is the difference? He that thinks himself born for his parents only, waits for his appointed or natural end: he that thinks himself born for his country also will sooner perish than behold her in slavery, and will regard the insults and indignities which must be borne in a commonwealth enslaved, as more terrible than death.

Had I attempted to say, that I instructed you in sentiments worthy of your ancestors, there is not a man who would not justly rebuke me. What I declare is that such principles are your own; I show that before my time such was the spirit of the commonwealth; though certainly in the execution of the particular measures I claim a share also for myself. The prosecutor, arraigning the whole proceedings, and embittering you against me as the cause of our alarms and dangers, in his eagerness to deprive me of honor for the moment, robs you of the eulogies that should endure forever. For should you, under a disbelief in the wisdom of my policy convict the defendant, you will appear to have done wrong, not to have suffered what befell you by the cruelty of fortune. But never, never can you have done wrong, O Athenians, in undertaking the battle for the freedom and safety of all! I swear it by your forefathers—those that met the peril at Marathon, those that took the field at Platæa, those in the sea-fight at Salamis, and those at Artemisium,[1] and many other brave men who repose in the public monuments, all of whom alike, as being worthy of the same honor, the country buried, Æschines, not only the successful or victorious! Justly! For the duty of brave men had been done by all: their fortune has been such as the Deity assigned to each.

Many great and glorious enterprises has the commonwealth, Æschines, undertaken and succeeded in through me; and she did not forget them. Here is the proof.

[1] Battles of the Persian wars

On the election of a person to speak the funeral oration immediately after the event, you were proposed, but the people would not have you, notwithstanding your fine voice, nor any other of your party—but me. And when you came forward in a brutal and shameful manner, and urged the same accusations against me which you now do, they elected me all the more. The reason—you are not ignorant of it, yet I will tell you. The Athenians knew as well the loyalty and zeal with which I conducted their affairs, as the dishonesty of you and your party. They thought it right also, that the person who was to speak in honor of the fallen and celebrate their valor, should not with his voice act the mourner of their fate, but that he should lament over them with his heart.

Nor, while the people felt thus, did the fathers and brothers of the deceased, who were chosen by the people to perform their obsequies, feel differently. For, having to order the funeral banquet, according to custom, at the house of the nearest relative of the deceased, they ordered it at mine. And with reason: because, though each to his own was nearer of kin than I, none was so near to them all collectively. He that had the deepest interest in their safety and success, had upon their mournful disaster the largest share of sorrow for them all.

It is pleasant to know that Demosthenes completely overcame the timidity felt by his countrymen toward the successful Macedonians. Æschines, failing to carry even a fourth of the jury, incurred a heavy fine and lost the right to bring a suit again. In his mortification he went into voluntary exile.

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CHAPTER XIV

SICILIAN IDYLLS OF THEOCRITUS

The Poetry of Rustic Life.

Perhaps the right of Theocritus to any place among idealists may be questioned. His gentle shepherds, and other peasants, feel no such mystical bond of sympathy, uniting man with outward nature, as a Wordsworth, or an Emerson, is constantly striving to express. And yet, the simple delight in rustic life, the music of woods and streams, has never found happier expression. A genial wit, a kindly humane feeling, a healthy love of life, all contribute to his unique charm. More even than with most poets, that charm vanishes when his ideas are uttered in an alien and less melodious language. Yet his true lovers can hardly desist from the attempt to echo his strains, and certainly such a volume as this would be quite incomplete, if the sweetest of Hellenic poets were wholly absent. However, in his idylls or pastorals, the part is often more than the whole, and he may perhaps be fairly represented here by a handful of brief versions from various hands.

Of Theocritus' life very little is accurately known, but he lived and wrote during the fourth century B.C., in his native Sicily, in the little isle of Cos,—and at the luxurious Alexandrian court of Ptolemy, king of Egypt. Like Burns, he is most enjoyable in his simplest utterances, in the broad Doric dialect of his island birthplace.

In the first idyll occurs the beautiful description of a carven bowl offered as a reward for rustic song. It has evidently three chief groups of figures embossed in low relief on its outer sides.

IDYLL I

THYRSIS

Sweet are the whispers of yon pine that makes
Low music o'er the spring, and, Goatherd, sweet
Thy piping: second thou to Pan alone.

GOATHERD

Shepherd, thy lay is as the noise of streams,
Falling and falling aye from yon tall crag.

THYRSIS

Pray, by the nymphs, pray, Goatherd, seat thee here
Against this hill-slope in the tamarisk shade,
And pipe me somewhat, while I guard thy goats.

GOATHERD

There, where the oaks are, and the shepherd's seat,
Sing as thou sangst erewhile.
I'll give thee, first,
To milk, ay thrice, a goat—she suckles twins,
Yet ne'ertheless can fill two milk pails full;—
Next, a deep drinking-cup, with sweet wax scoured,
Two-handled, newly-carven, smacking yet
O' the chisel. Ivy reaches up and climbs
About its lip, gilt here and there with sprays
Of woodbine, that enwreathed about it flaunts
Her saffron fruitage.
Framed therein appears
A damsel ('tis a miracle of art)
In robe and snood: and suitors at her side,
With locks fair-flowing, on her right and left
Battle with words that fail to reach her heart.

She, laughing, glances now on this, flings now
Her chance regards on that: they, all for love
Wearied and eye-swoln, find their labor lost.
Carven elsewhere an ancient fisher stands
On the rough rocks; thereto the old man with pains
Drags his great casting-net, as one that toils
Full stoutly: every fibre of his frame
Seems fishing; so about the greybeard's neck
(In might a youngster yet) the sinews swell.
Hard by that wave-beat sire a vineyard bends
Beneath its graceful load of burnished grapes;
A boy sits on the rude fence watching them.
Near him two foxes; down the rows of grapes
One ranging steals the ripest; one assails
With wiles the poor lad's scrip, to leave him soon
Stranded and supperless. He plaits meanwhile
With ears of corn a right fine cricket trap,
And fits it on a rush: for vines, for scrip
Little he cares, enamoured of his toy.
The cup is hung all round with lissome briar.
A goat it cost me, and a great white cheese.
Ne'er yet my lips came near it, virgin still
It stands. And welcome to such boon art thou,
If for my sake thou'lt sing that lay of lays.
I jest not: up, lad, sing: no songs thou'lt own
In the dim land where all things are forgot.

—*Calverly's translation.*

In the tenth Idyll is inserted a reapers' chorus, which may well have been, in part at least, a real folk-song, older far than our poet. Like most of Theocritus' verse it is in hexameters, but seems to demand in English the more familiar ballad-metre. The division into couplets, here indicated, is no less marked in the Greek.

MOWERS' CHORUS

Demeter, Giver of the fruit, Bestower of the grain,
Easy and rich the harvest make, our labor not in vain!

Now, binders, tightly bind the sheaves, lest they that pass may say
" 'Twas men of straw that labored here, and wasted was their pay."

Toward the North wind let the swath we cut,—or else the West,—
Lie as it falls, for so, 'tis said, the grain will ripen best.

Ye mowers, when the lark awakes our labor is begun,
Nor ends until he hies to rest: but noontide heat we shun.

The folk that tread the threshing-floor at noon may take no rest:
For then it is the chaff from out the wheat is parted best.

The frog, lads, hath a merry life, for never need he care
If one shall come to fetch his dram: he still hath drink to spare.

More carefully the lentils boil, thou steward full of greed,
And do not slit thy fingers while thou'rt splitting cummin seed.

In the seventh Idyll we have a sketch of the poet himself, under the name of Simichidas (Snub-nose). Walking with two friends to the harvest festival of Demeter, the Grain-giver, he meets a youth whose name Milton has borrowed for the most famous of English elegies. The whole poem seems an actual memory of youthful days in Cos, whither Theocritus is said to have betaken himself to become the pupil of the poet Philetas.

Poplar and elm
Showed aisles of pleasant splendor, greenly roofed
By tufted leaves. Scarce midway were we now,
When, thanks be to the Muses, there drew near
A wayfarer from Crete, young Lycidas.
The horn'd herd was his care; a glance might tell

So much: for every inch a herdsman he.
Slung o'er his shoulder was a ruddy hide
Torn from a he-goat, shaggy, tangle-haired,
That reeked of rennet yet: a broad belt clasped
The patched cloak round his breast, and for a staff
A gnarled wild olive bough his right hand bore.
Soon with a quiet smile he spake—his eye
Twinkled, and laughter sat upon his lip:
"And whither ploddest thou thy weary way
Beneath the noontide sun, Simichidas?
For now the lizard sleeps upon the wall,
The crested lark folds now his wandering wing.
Dost speed, a bidden guest, to some reveller's board?
Or townward to the treading of the grape?
For lo! recoiling from thy hurrying feet
The pavement stones ring out right merrily."

Then I: "Friend Lycidas, men say that none
Of haymakers or herdsmen is thy match
At piping; and my soul is glad thereat.
Yet to speak sooth, I think I rival thee.
Now look, this road holds holiday to-day:
For banded brethren solemnize a feast
To richly-dight Demeter, thanking her
For her good gifts: since with no grudging hand
Hath the boon goddess filled the wheaten floors.
So come. The way, the day, is thine as mine:
Try we our woodcraft—each may learn from each.
I am, as thou, a clarion-voice of song;
All hail me chief of minstrels. But I am not,
Heaven knows, o'er-credulous: no, I scarce can yet
(I think) out-vie Philetas, ...

—*Calverly.*

Last we may set the dramatic sketch in which the pair of frivolous Syracusan ladies, and the thronging streets of Ptolemy's splendid capital Alexandria, are most vividly delineated.

THE FEAST OF ADONIS

GORGO (*At her friend's door.*)
Praxinoë within?

EUNOË
Why, Gorgo, dear,
How late you are. Yes, she's within.

PRAXINOË (*Appearing.*)
What, no!
And so you're come at last. A seat here, Eunoë;
And set a cushion.

EUNOË
There is one.

PRAXINOË
Sit down.

GORGO
Oh, what a thing's a spirit. Do you know,
I've scarcely got alive to you, Praxinoë,
There's such a crowd—such heaps of carriages,
And horses, and fine soldiers, all full dressed:
And then you live such an immense way off!

PRAXINOË
Why, 'twas his shabby doing. He would take
This hole that he calls house, at the world's end.
'Twas all to spite me, and to part us two.

GORGO. (*Speaking lower.*)
Don't talk so of your husband, there's a dear,
Before the little one. See how he looks at you.

PRAXINOË. (*To the little boy.*)
There, don't look grave, child; cheer up, Zopy, sweet;
It isn't your papa we're talking of.

GORGO (*Aside.*)

He thinks it is though.

PRAXINOË

(*To Gorgo.*)

Oh, no—nice papa!
Well, this strange body once (let us say *once*
And then he won't know who we're telling of),
Going to buy some washes and saltpetre,
Comes bringing salt! the great big simpleton!

GORGO

And there's my precious ninny, Dioclede:
He gave for five old ragged fleeces, yesterday,
Ten drachmas! for mere dirt! trash upon trash!
But come; put on your things; button away,
Or we shall miss the show. It's the king's own:
And I am told the queen has made of it
A wonderful fine thing.

PRAXINOË

Ay, luck has luck.
Well, tell us all about it; for we hear
Nothing in this vile place.

GORGO

We haven't time.
Workers can't throw away their holidays.

PRAXINOË

Some water, Eunoë and then, my fine one,
To take your rest again. Puss loves good lying.
Come; move, girl, move; some water, water first.
Look how she brings it! Now, then;—hold, hold, careless;
Not quite so fast; you're wetting all my gown.
There; that'll do. Now, please the gods, I'm washed.
The key of the great chest—where's that? Go fetch it.

(*Exit* EUNOË.)

GORGO

Praxinoë, that gown with the full skirts
Becomes you mightily. What did it cost you?

PRAXINOË

Oh, don't remind me of it. More than one
Or two good pounds, besides the time and trouble.

GORGO

All of which you had forgotten.

PRAXINOË

Ah, ha! True;
That's good. You're quite right.

(*Reënter* EUNOË.)

Come; my cloak; my cloak;
And parasol. There—help it on now, properly.
(*To the little boy.*)
Child, child, you cannot go. The horse will bite it;
The Horrid Woman's coming. Well, well, simpleton,
Cry, if you will; but you must not get lamed.
Come, Gorgo. Phrygia, take the child; and play with him;
And call the dog indoors and lock the gate.

(*They go out.*)

Powers, what a crowd! How shall we get along?
Why, they're like ants! countless! innumerable!
Well, Ptolemy, you've done fine things, that's certain,
Since the gods took your father. No one nowadays
Does harm to travellers as they used to do,
After the Egyptian fashion, lying in wait,—
Masters of nothing but detestable tricks;
And all alike—a set of cheats and brawlers.
—Gorgo, sweet friend, what will become of us?
Here are the king's horse-guards! Pray, my good man,
Don't tread upon us so. See the bay horse!
Look how it rears! It's like a great mad dog.
How you stand, Eunoë! It will throw him! Certainly!
How lucky that I left the child at home.

GORGO

Courage, Praxinoë: they have passed us now;
They've gone into the courtyard.

PRAXINOË

Good! I breathe again.
I never could abide in all my life
A horse and a cold snake.

GORGO (*Addressing an old woman.*)

From court, mother?

OLD WOMAN

Yes, child.

GORGO

Pray, is it easy to get in?

OLD WOMAN

The Greeks got into Troy. Everything's done
By trying.

(*Exit* OLD WOMAN.)

GORGO

Bless us! How she bustles off.
Why, the old woman's quite oracular.
But women must know everything; even what Juno
Wore on her wedding day. See now, Praxinoë,
How the gate's crowded

PRAXINOË

Frightfully indeed.
Give me your hand, dear Gorgo; and do you
Hold fast of Eutychis's, Eunoë.
Don't let her go; don't stir an inch; and so
We'll all squeeze in together. Stick close now.
Oh me! oh me! My veil's torn right in two!
Do take care, my good man, and mind my cloak.

MAN

'Twas not my fault, but I'll take care.

PRAXINOË

What heaps!
They drive like pigs!

MAN

Courage, old girl! All's safe.

PRAXINOË

Blessings upon you, sir, now and forever,
For taking care of us. A good, kind soul.
How Eunoë squeezes us! Do, child, make way
For your own self. There; now, we've all got in,
As the man said when he was put in prison.

GORGO

Praxinoë, do look there! What lovely tapestry!
How fine and showy! One would think the gods did it.

PRAXINOË

Holy Athenè! How these artists work!
How they do paint their pictures from the life!
The figures stand so like and move so like!
They're quite alive, not worked. Well, certainly,
Man's a wise creature.

SECOND MAN

Do hold your tongue there; Chatter, chatter, chatter.
The turtles stun one, with their yawning gabble.

GORGO

Hey-day! Whence comes the man? What is't to you
If we do chatter? Speak where you've a right.
You're not the master here. And as for that,
Our tongue's Peloponnesiac; and we hope
It's lawful for the Dorians to speak Doric!

PRAXINOË

We've but one master, by the Honey-sweet![1]
And don't fear you, nor all your empty blows.

GORGO

Hush, hush, Praxinoë! There's the Grecian girl,
A most amazing creature, going to sing
About Adonis; she'll sing something fine,
I warrant. See how sweetly she prepares!

(*The Song.*)

GORGO

Well, if that's not a clever creature,
Trust me! Lord! What a quantity of things she knows!
And what a charming voice! 'Tis time to go though,
For there's my husband hasn't had his dinner,
And you'd best come across him when he wants it!
Good-bye, Adonis, darling, come again.

—*Leigh Hunt.*

This teeming world-city, where men of all nations jostle each other, is more nearly akin to the Rome of the empire than to the comparatively simple Greek life expressed in the best Hellenic literature and art. That life is already but a fading memory. Athens itself, in Theocritus' poetry, is as rarely mentioned, almost as remote, as Homeric Troy. It is time to close the volume.

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[1] A name for Persephone.

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